PONTIFICAL ATHENAEUM
REGINA APOSTOLORUM

FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY

Jason A. Mitchell, L.C.

BEING AND PARTICIPATION

The Method and Structure of Metaphysical Reflection according to Cornelio Fabro

Volume II

Dissertatio ad Doctoratum
in Facultate Philosophiæ
Pontificii Athenaei Regina Apostolorum

Rome 2012

Vidimus et adprobavimus ad normam statutorum
Pontificii Athenæi Regina Apostolorum

Prof. P. Jesús Villagrasa, L.C.
Prof. P. Alain Contat
Prof. P. Rafael Pascual, L.C.

Imprimi potest

P. Rafael Pascual, L.C.
Decanus Facultatis Philosophiæ

P. Benjamin Dueñas, L.C.
Secretarius Generalis

Romæ, ex Pontificio Athenæo Regina Apostolorum,
die vi mensis septembris anni 2012

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MITCHELL JASON A., L.C.

Being and Participation: The Method and Structure of Metaphysical Reflection according to Cornelio Fabro – Tesi dottorato. Filosofia 14 – 2 volumi.
Roma : Ateneo Pontificio Regina Apostolorum, 2012. I vol. 432 pp.; II vol. 416 pp.; 17x24 cm.
In testa al front.: Ateneo Pontificio Regina Apostolorum.

ISBN: 978-88-96990-09-4

Finito di stampare nel mese di dicembre 2012 dalla Tipografia Città Nuova della P.A.M.O.M.- Roma

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Chapter Four

THE EMERGENCE OF *ESSE*

In *NMP*, Fabro explored the theme of static participation and the "metaphysical *structure* of the creature", yet promised to continue his investigations and later publish a work on *dynamic* participation in terms of the Thomistic synthesis of Platonic *participation* and Aristotelian *causality*[1]. In 1954, he fulfilled his promise in the Chaire Cardinal Mercier lectures held at the University of Louvain on "the metaphysical foundation of causality"[2] and "causal-dynamic participation"[3]. These lectures were edited and published in Italian and French towards the end of 1960 and beginning of 1961[4].

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[1] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 9.

[2] Fabro characterizes the studies of *NMP* and *PC* as follows: "Also for this study on the metaphysical foundation of causality, as in the preceding one on the metaphysical structure of the creature, one is immediately struck by the impression of the profound simplicity and coherence that an assiduous, direct and critically ordered reading of St. Thomas's work presents" (*PC*, 41).

[3] See C. FABRO, "The Intensive Hermeneutics of Thomistic Philosophy…", 450-451 n. 3: "The complex and difficult notion of dynamic participation is the subject matter of my second volume devoted to the study of Thomistic participation […] [It] contains the results of twenty years of research". See H. JOHN, *The Thomist Spectrum*, 97: "In this massive volume, the principles of *Partecipazione*, which emphasize 'static' or structural participation, are extended to consideration of the problems of causality, seen as 'dynamic participation.' Similarly, where *Partecipazione* explored St. Thomas' relation to his immediate sources, the Mercier lectures offer a confrontation of the Thomistic doctrine of being with the whole history of Western philosophy, from the Pre-Socratics to Heidegger".

[4] C. FABRO, *Participation et causalité selon s. Thomas D'Aquin*, Éditions Nauwelaerts, Paris-Louvain 1961; *Partecipazione e Causalità secondo S. Tommaso d'Aquino*, Società Editrice Internazionale, Torino 1960. Fabro notes that the Italian version contains further developments in the text and notes and some slight modifications in the arrangement of the material (See *PC* 10). I will be quoting from the Italian version. Several sections of the work were published before 1960: "Actualité et originalité de l'*esse* thomiste" (1956); "Per una semantica originaria

PC is divided into three parts. Part One, "The Formation of Thomistic *esse*", deals with the problem of εἶναι in Parmenides, Heraclitus, Plato and Aristotle, and the Thomistic "emergence" of *esse* – namely, how we come to know *esse* as *actus essendi* in metaphysics. Part Two is entitled "The Causality of Being" and deals with Thomistic causality as a synthesis of Platonic participation and Aristotelian causality, the predicamental, formal causality of becoming (*fieri*), and the transcendental causality of *esse*. Part Three is entitled "The Dialectic of Causality" and deals with the role of analogy in a metaphysics of participation, confronts St. Thomas's thought on participation and *esse* with that of Eckhart, Nicholas of Cusa, Marsilio Ficino and Hegel, and deals with how Thomistic *esse* was obscured in the Scholasticism that followed St. Thomas's death. The Conclusion of *PC* summarizes the results of *NMP* and *PC* on participation, structural composition, causality and analogy[5].

Part Two and the beginning of Part Three of the French and Italian editions of *PC* are notably different in structure. The rearrangement of the French text in the Italian version and the occasional additions to the Italian version make it somewhat difficult to follow the logic behind Fabro's exposition of predicamental and transcendental causality in the Italian version. Interpreting the Italian version in light of the arrangement of the French version will help to overcome this difficulty. Consequently, before speaking about metaphysical reflection in the work, it is helpful to look at a concordance between the two versions, based on the original French version:

Concordance between Parts Two and Three of the Italian (1960) and French Versions (1961) of *Participation and Causality*			
		Deuxième partie: La causalité de l'être	
		Section I: La causalité prédicamentale	
La causalità verticale platonica	397-404	319-328	La causalité verticale platonicienne
La causalità orizzontale aristotelica	404-410	328-334	La causalité horizontale aristotélicienne
La causalità della forma	323-330	335-343	La causalité synthétique thomiste

dello *esse* tomistico" (1956); "L'obscurcissement de l'*esse* dans l'école thomiste" (1958); "Dall'ente di Aristotele all'*esse* di S. Tommaso" (1958); and "Influenze tomistiche nella filosofia del Ficino" (1959).

[5] These conclusions may also be found in an Italian article, "Elementi per una dottrina di partecipazione" (1967), and an English article, "The Intensive Hermeneutics of Thomistic Philosophy: The Notion of Participation" (1974).

		Section II: La causalité prédicamentale univoque	
Causalità formale dell'*esse* (*forma dat esse*)	330-341; 345-349	344-359	La causalité de la forme (*forma dat esse*)
La forma come principio dell'esse specifico e la struttura dinamica del concreto	355-358	359-362	La causalité de la forme et l'émergence de l'*esse*
		Section III: La causalité transcendantale	
--	358-367	363-374	La causalité de l'*esse*
La causalità dell'*esse* e la struttura dell'ente finito	367-372	374-380	La causalité de l'*esse* et la structure de l'être fini
Causa prima e causa seconda: La fondazione della libertà creata	448-462	381-397	Causalité prédicamentale et transcendantale
I teoremi della causalità	435-444	397-409	La structure de la causalité prédicamentale et transcendantale
		Troisième partie: La dialectique de la causalité	
		Section I: L'immanence de la causalité	
La causalità orizzontale aristotelica	307-318	413-426	La transposition de la causalité aristotélicienne
--	318-322; 255-272	426-451	La transposition de la causalité platonicienne
Il principio della totalità e l'espansione della causalità	410-418	452-461	Le principe de totalité
	418-424	461-468	La causalité des corps
I gradi della causalità creata	380-386	468-488	Causalité créée et processions divines
Processioni divine e partecipazione causale	386-396; 424		
La causalità trascendentale dell'*esse* e la libertà umana	424-434; 463-466	488-508	Causalité créée et causalité divine
		Section II La sémantique de la participation thomiste	
La *reductio ad unum* e l'analogia di attribuzione	499-505	509-537	Participation, causalité, analogie
Analogia di proporzionalità e analogia di attribuzione	505-514; 517		
La semantica dell'analogia metafisica: somiglianza e analogia	518-526		
La semantica dell'*esse*: dall'*esse* formale all'*esse* attuale	527-539	537-551	La sémantique de l'*esse*: de l'*esse* formel à l'*esse* actuel
Il parmenidismo avicenniano di Meister Eckhart	539-553	551-567	L'immanence éléate de l'*esse* d'après Eckhart
Il parmenidismo pitagorico del Cusano	553-567	567-581	L'intensité de l'*esse* chez Nicolas de cuse
Dialettica hegeliana, analogia eckhartiana e analogia thomistica	581-586	581-609	Dialectique hégélienne, analogie eckhartienne et analogie thomiste
Causalità, partecipazione e analogia	586-602		
La semantica della partecipazione	630-636	610-622	Thématique de la participation
La ripresa dell'attualità dell'*esse*	636-640		

As the concordance shows, the main section on predicamental causality in the Italian version is limited to pages 330-341, 345-349 and 355-358, while the section on transcendental causality is found in the Italian version on pages 358-372, 435-444 and 448-462.

With regard to Fabro's thought on the method of metaphysical reflection, Fabro builds on what he established in *NMP* as "intensive metaphysical abstraction (reflection)"[6]. *NMP* concentrated on the structure of finite *ens* and, consequently, on the first stages of metaphysical reflection. This reflection, as we have seen, is configured above all as a dialectical comparison of form and *esse* in the line of act and structural participation and as a twofold resolution of essence (according to participated perfection) and *esse*. In *PC*, two themes dominate his reflections on the method of metaphysical reflection: the problem of the foundation of participated *esse* and the relationship between *ens* and *esse* in metaphysical resolution.

I have divided this chapter on metaphysical reflection in *PC* into five sections which correspond in large part to the development of the principal sections of the work:

1. *Metaphysical resolution as a process of foundation*: In the Introduction (*PC*, 11-68), Fabro critiques the theory of Thomists who attribute knowledge of *esse* as *actus essendi* to the act of judgment. Subsequently, he argues that we come to know *esse* as *actus essendi* through a process of reduction and resolution.

2. *The emergence of* esse: In the section on "The Thomistic emergence of *esse*" (*PC*, 215-239), Fabro considers how *ens* is "determined" in metaphysics and, thus, indirectly with the problem of metaphysical method. He characterizes the determination of *ens* as a progressive intensification of both *ens* and *esse* and refers to a twofold resolution of *esse formale* and *actus essendi*. He looks at the problems which stem from attributing our knowledge of *actus essendi* to judgment and points out that our knowledge of *esse* as *actus essendi* involves understanding it in the transcendental couplet "*ens per participationem et Esse per essentiam*". Our metaphysical knowledge of *esse*, therefore, embraces the entire itinerary of metaphysics and includes the latter stages of metaphysical reflection: the demonstration that God exists (*Deum esse*), the "determination" of God as *Ipsum Esse Subsistens*, the demonstration and explanation of creation in terms of

[6] See H. JOHN, "Participation Revisited", *The Modern Schoolman* 39 (1962), 159.

participation, and the explanation of the participative structure of creatures in terms of real composition and causal dependence.

3. *Metaphysical reflection and predicamental causality*: Fabro's text on predicamental causality (*PC*, 330-349 and 355-358) addresses the problem of formal causality and the Aristotelian-based principles which hold that *forma dat esse*[7] and *forma est causa et principium essendi*[8]. In the ascending movement proper to Fabro's metaphysical reflection, the problem of formal causality can be dealt with before proving the existence of God as ultimate cause of all being, but is only understood properly and more completely after an initial understanding of God's divine causality in creation.

4. *Metaphysical reflection and transcendental causality*: By taking into consideration both the French and Italian versions of *PC*, the section of transcendental causality, in the Italian version, corresponds to *PC*, 358-371 and *PC*, 434-461. With regard to transcendental causality, metaphysical reflection concerns the problem of the production or derivation of the two constitutive principles of every finite *ens*: essence and *esse*. On the one hand, we have the total production of created *esse* from nothing (*ex nihilo*) and a participation in a similitude of divine *esse*. On the other, we have the problem of the divine ideas and the production of the limiting-principle in

[7] See *De ente et essentia*, ch. 3: "Talis autem invenitur habitudo materiae et formae, quia forma dat esse materiae"; *In V Metaph*., lect. 2: "Et similiter materia et forma: nam forma dat esse, materia autem recipit".

[8] See I, q. 75, a. 5 ad 3: "*Forma est causa essendi materiae*, *et agens*, unde agens, inquantum reducit materiam in actum formae transmutando, est ei causa essendi"; *In II Phys*., lect. 10: "Sed quia *forma est causa essendi absolute*, aliae vero tres sunt causae essendi secundum quod aliquid accipit esse; inde est quod in immobilibus non considerantur aliae tres causae, sed solum causa formalis"; *De anima*, a. 14 ad 8: "Ad octavum dicendum quod anima dicitur forma corporis in quantum est causa vitae, sicut *forma est principium essendi*: vivere enim viventibus est esse, ut dicit philosophus in II de anima"; *In I Phys*., lect. 15: "Et ideo dicit quod de principio formali, utrum sit unum vel plura, et quot et quae sint, pertinet determinare ad philosophiam primam, et usque ad illud tempus reservetur: quia *forma est principium essendi*, et ens inquantum huiusmodi est subiectum primae philosophiae; sed materia et privatio sunt principia entis transmutabilis, quod a philosopho naturali consideratur"; *In Boethii de Hebdomadibus*, lect. 2: "Circa primum considerandum est, quod ex quo id quod est, potest aliquid habere praeter suam essentiam, necesse est quod in eo consideretur duplex esse. Quia enim *forma est principium essendi*, necesse est quod secundum quamlibet formam habitam, habens aliqualiter esse dicatur".

created *ens*: the created essence. The question arises: "Does Fabro's emphasis on the method of reducing of participated *esse* to *Esse per essentiam* leave aside the problem of essence or imply two separate lines of transcendental participation in a 'double creation' of essence and *esse*?"[9] Insight into this problem is found at the beginning of Part Three (*PC*, 469-483: not included in the French version), the concluding paragraphs of the second section of Part Three (*PC*, 592-600) and in the Conclusion to the work (*PC*, 629-651).

5. *Metaphysical reflection and the analogy of being*: In the sections dedicated to analogy, Fabro argues that analogy is founded on participation and is the "semantics of participation" and the "conclusive moment of metaphysics". Fabro holds that, for St. Thomas, the doctrine of analogy expresses, "by means of a threefold dialectical process […], the movement proper to our intellect in its ascension to God"[10]. In this section we will limit our study to: 1) the role of analogy in the method of metaphysics as a *reductio ad unum* and 2) the passage from finite to infinite being by means of analogical discourse.

Graphically, the general structure of the metaphysical reflection provided in *PC* may be represented as follows:

[9] In his *Nature and Creature*, in the section on "The double metaphysical reduction" (p. 185) and in the section on "Being is consequent upon form" (p. 334), Aertsen sees the term "double creation" as problematic. A critique of Fabro's use of the term "double creation" is found throughout R. te Velde's *Participation & substantiality in Thomas Aquinas*.

[10] C. FABRO, *L'uomo e il rischio di Dio*, 159. The threefold dialectical process to which Fabro refers is St. Thomas's *via causalitatis*, *via remotionis* and *via eminentiae*.

Metaphysical Reflection

Initial notion of *ens*: need for a resolution to *esse* (*PC*, 65)

Problem of the "structure" of *ens*
- Formal resolution of perfection (*PC*, 221-228)
- Resolution of act (*PC*, 229-239)

Problem of causality
- Predicamental causality (*PC*, 323-355)[11]
  - Form limits *esse*
  - *Esse* actuates form
- Transcendental causality (*PC*, 355-379)[12]
  - Creation
  - Conservation
  - Divine Motion

Conclusive moment of metaphysics
- Analogy of being (*PC*, 483-525)

Summary: Notion of intensive *esse* (*PC*, 640-653)

1. Metaphysical resolution as a process of foundation (*PC*, 7-66)

PC's Introduction[13] frames the problem of being against the backdrop of the history of philosophy and argues for the return to Thomistic *esse* as the solution to the problem of the foundation of finite *ens* – as regards both its ultimate structure and its total dependence on the Creator. This return to Thomistic *esse* in Twentieth-century Thomism and the transition from the foundation of finite *ens* on essence to its foundation on *esse* is not without its difficulties. This is evident in Fabro's examination of the positions of five philosophers on the problem of Thomistic *esse*: F. M. Sladeczek, K. Rahner, M. D. Roland-Gosselin, A. Marc and L.-B. Geiger. What characterizes these authors is either a quasi-reduction of Thomistic *esse* to

[11] The division between predicamental and transcendental causality is clearer in the French version. *Participation et causalitè*, "La causalitè prédicamentale univoque", 344-362, corresponds to *Partecipazione e causalità*, 323-355.

[12] *Participation et causalitè*, "La causalité transcendantale", 363-409, corresponds to *Partecipazione e causalità*, 355-380.

[13] The introduction to *PC* was originally published in French in 1956: "*Actualité et originalité de l'esse thomiste*", *Revue Thomiste* 3 (1956), 240-270 and 480-510.

existentia or an over-emphasis of the role of judgment in our knowledge of *esse*.

Pars destruens. F. M. Sladeczek bases his work on a text from St. Thomas's early *Commentary on the Sentences* (*In I Sent.*, d. 33, q. 1, a. 1 ad 1)[14]. As we saw earlier, the text distinguishes three meanings of *esse*: *essentia*, *actus essentiae*, and *veritas propositionibus*. Sladeczek holds that the first meaning is that of *Dingsein* (*res*) or *Etwassein* (*aliquid*); in more traditional terms this is the Scholastic *ens ut nomen* or *ens nominaliter sumptum*. The second is *Wirklichsein* (*actu esse*)[15] and expresses the "being-in-act" which corresponds to the traditional terms of *esse ut verbum*, *esse participialiter sumptum* or even *actu esse verbaliter spectatum*. Fabro points out that Sladeczek is implicitly trying to reconcile Thomism and Suarezism even though Suárez is never mentioned by name. Fabro holds that the problem with Sladeczek's interpretation of Thomistic *esse* is his reduction of *esse* to *existentia*. *Wirklichsein* means existence and "effectuality"; thanks to this "effectuality" the thing (*Ding*) can be considered as real and, therefore, opposed to nothingness. Essence and *esse* are reduced to two aspects or instances of reality and are not considered as two constitutive principles of reality: "In this interpretation, *esse* is the being-in-act of the essence, its factual realization, the fact of its passage from possibility to reality". Thus, for Sladeczek, "*esse in actu* supplants *esse* [*ut*] *actus*, namely, existence has eliminated *esse*"[16].

Like Sladeczek, Karl Rahner also interprets Thomistic *esse* from a largely Suarezian prospective. In *Geist in Welt* (1939)[17], Rahner studies our knowledge of *esse* and begins his analysis of being by noting the correspondence that St. Thomas affirms between essence and apprehension and *esse* and judgment[18]. Rahner, Fabro notes, rightly holds that *esse* as copula of judgment is founded on the *esse* of the thing and that Thomistic

[14] See F. M. SLADECZEK, "Die verschiedene Bedeutungen des Seins nach des hl. Thomas von Aquin", *Scholastik* 5 (1930), 192-209 and 523-550.

[15] Fabro used Sladeczek's terminology in *NMP* (p. 187) to refer to the first two stages of the development of the notion of being (*ens-esse*) and that these two stages are surpassed in the third stage. According to *NMP*, one achieves this third stage in the notion of *esse* by means of intensive metaphysical abstraction-reflection.

[16] C. FABRO, *PC*, 45.

[17] See K. RAHNER, *Geist in Welt. Zur Metaphysik der endlichen Erkenntnis bei Thomas von Aquin*, Rauch, Innsbruck-Leipsig 1939.

[18] See *In Boethii De Trinitate*, q. 5, a. 3.

esse is not merely factual reality (*blosses Vorhandensein*). However, Rahner's attempt at clarifying being and the relationship between essence and *esse* is ambiguous and seems to remain within the realm of its notional content, thus impeding the search for the foundation of being in terms of causality[19]. Also problematic is the fact that the *esse* expressed by judgment is seemingly indifferent to the determination of *esse* as foundation:

> The correspondence that is affirmed between simple apprehension and the content of essence as well as that between the act of judgment and *act of* "*esse*" is of a methodological nature and of not a structural and constitutive nature: the *esse* of the judgment is purely functional *per se* (copula) and as such does not have its own reality; its "quality" of being depends on the reality and quality of the act or on the reality of being of the synthesis of the terms that it is called to connect. As such, the *esse* expressed by judgment is indifferent and, therefore, can be either real or rational, substantial or accidental, and so on: it can certainly refer to real *esse*, but this presupposes a very explicit orientation of the entire intentional sphere of consciousness and thus first demands a clear determination of that meaning of *esse* which should be qualified as fundamental. Regard this, the reference of judgment alone cannot offer any precision, since the *esse* of judgment is founded and not foundational; thus, it is derived and not originary. As the essence which is grasped in simple apprehension is founded on the presence of the nature of things, so the *esse* (and *non-esse*) of judgment is founded on the act of being (or non-being) of things[20].

The real problem, as Fabro points out, concerns this act of being. Fabro argues that Rahner comes only to *esse in actu*, and does not come to *esse* as *actus essendi*. What is more, Rahner's *esse in actu* is presented by means of a type of abstraction and as a pre-notion (*Vorgriff*)[21]. Once again, according to Fabro, we are faced with a reduction of *esse* to *esse in actu*:

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[19] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 46.

[20] C. FABRO, *PC*, 46-47.

[21] C. FABRO, *PC*, 47: "Rahner affirms that every judgment refers either directly or indirectly to real being, or more precisely to effectual being, to *ens*. Thus, instead of coming to the fundamental act, he falls back on the factual synthesis which is *ens* and passes over *esse*. In this perspective, *esse* is presented by means of an abstraction, in a type of 'pre-notion' (*Vorgriff*), which constitutes a type of transcendental possibility of judgment in which 'form' is presented as the content of the predicate of the proposition. The pre-notion concerning *esse* should be grasped just as the pre-notion of concerning the 'form' is shown *in se* negatively indeterminate. The form, which is the content of the predicate of the proposition, is

> Thus, Rahner speaks of a universality of *esse* which is determined under two points of view, the one of the formal unity (of essence) and the other of the super-categorical unity (that of existence, evidently). Like Sladeczek, he also denies that St. Thomas intends formal *esse* properly as a pure essence; but one can speak of *esse formale* in the sense that it is that which is foundation of all the other real determinations which it *in se* gathers and unfolds as pertaining to one unique real *ens* and in this sense only *esse* can be called "act" of essential determinations[22].

In the end, Rahner's *esse* seems to be some sort of super-categorial unity from which all the possible determinations of reality derive and, consequently, seems to be nothing more than *entitas*[23]. In conclusion, Rahner doesn't come to the determination of *esse ut actus* because he has left aside the problem of causality.

Fabro also critiques the position of M.-D. Roland-Gosselin[24], who determines or derives the notion of *esse* from the analysis of judgment. Fabro argues that this interpretation is flawed since it reduces the principle of causality to the Leibnizian principle of sufficient reason and that the interpretation, in its attempt to isolate the notion of *ens* from all real content, is left with an Aristotelian-Suarezian notion of *entitas* as the extreme abstraction of "that which is". Fabro concludes his critique by contrasting Roland-Gosslelin's method of passing from the structure of judgment to the

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shown to be opposed to the to the concrete, like that to which judgment is related as *in se* most broad, universal, since it is predicable of many possible concretes. Thus also with *esse*: 'The *esse in se* as *esse* is left to be predicated by many singulars'. There is no doubt that *esse* is here to indicate the reality of the concrete existents: it is *esse in actu*, the *in se* as real synthesis in act of the multiplicity of the formal determinations".

[22] C. FABRO, *PC*, 47.

[23] C. FABRO, *PC*, 48: "Here he develops, it seems to me, the passage to *esse* as super-categorial unity in the sense of profound unity of all realty and as the foundation from which all its possible determinations derive: in fact, thanks to *esse* as "effectuality" (*Wirklichsein*), in the current sense, are all the essential determinations real; for this reason, in all judgments one is going to hit the same *esse* and in all judgments is also made present a knowledge of *esse* itself. This *esse* of Rahner is *entitas* in the Aristotelian sense, as the abstract of *ens*, which he, on the other hand, continues to deal with as *esse* which is the *actus essendi* of St. Thomas, bringing along an equivocation that has a long history in the interpretation of Thomism".

[24] M.-D. ROLAND-GOSSELIN, *Essai d'une étude critique de la connaissance*, Introduction et première, Bibliothèque Thomiste XVII, Paris 1932.

structure of the real with the method of resolution of act (from accidental and substantial formal act to the entitative act of *esse*) and resolution-foundation of participated *esse* on *Esse per essentiam*. Thomistic metaphysics, then, does not seek to isolate *ens* from real content by means of an abstraction, but rather to reduce it to its foundation:

> [In Roland-Gosselin's interpretation], one proceeds from synthesis to synthesis, from the structure of the synthesis of judgment to the structure of the synthesis of the real which is then expressed by the notional plexus of essence and existence in its most abstract form which leaves aside all content. In St. Thomas, on the other hand, even if at times he starts from the synthesis of judgment in order to clarify the real synthesis and its act of being, his advance is characterized by the progressive deepening of act to act, from accidental act to substantial act, from formal act to authentic *esse*, which is *actus essendi* as act which is not further resolvable unless according to the dependence of participation on Pure Act which is *esse per essentiam*, in such a way that the "reference to content" for every judgment of the truth of being – and above all for the first principles – is unavoidable[25].

According to Fabro, André Marc[26] also does not completely overcome the danger of formalizing *esse* and reducing it to existence. Like the preceding authors, Marc stops at the direct correspondence between the *esse* of judgment and the actuality of the real. He doesn't delve into the nature or quality of this actuality, that of *esse*, and leaves the reader asking whether this actuality Aristotelian *esse in actu* or Thomistic *actus essendi*[27].

Lastly, Fabro considers L.-B. Geiger's theory. Although Fabro recognizes in *NMP* (1950) that Geiger's work on participation is the most complete treatise on the notion of participation[28], he raises several doubts regarding Geiger's fidelity to Aquinas's thought. Moreover, Fabro is hesitant to accept Geiger's emphasis on the role of judgment in our knowledge of *actus essendi*[29]. Fabro's critique of Geiger's theory can be summarized as follows:

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[25] C. FABRO, *PC*, 50.

[26] A. MARC, *L'idée de l'être chez Saint Thomas et dans la Scolastique postérieure*, Archives de Philosophie, Paris 1933.

[27] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 52.

[28] C. FABRO, *NMP* (1950), 20.

[29] The second edition of *NMP* (1950) also included a critique of Geiger's theory of participation. See C. FABRO, *NMP* (1950), 26-29.

1) *Methodological critique*. Fabro faults Geiger for leaving aside the study of the sources of St. Thomas's thought[30] and for adopting a synthetic method in his exposition instead of an analytical one. This synthetic approach does not give *actus essendi* the attention it deserves: "In the systematic research that Fr. Geiger has undertaken of participation in St. Thomas, a proper determination of *esse* is lacking, and that perhaps depends on the strongly synthetic method adopted"[31]. Without a proper determination of *esse*, Geiger seems to remain within the Scholastic distinction of *esse essentiae* and *esse existentiae*.

2) *Flawed distinction between two systems of participation*. Geiger's synthetic approach to St. Thomas's texts also leads to a flawed distinction between two systems of participation: participation by similitude and participation by composition. Geiger gives the priority or precedence to the limitation of the essence by means of participation by similitude. This proposal, Fabro notes, raises serious doubts concerning the Thomistic principle that states that "an act is only limited in its order by a corresponding potency" and that "act is not self-limiting". According to Fabro, Aquinas's texts on participation and "likeness" do not seem to indicate two different systems of participation but rather a correspondence between similarity and composition. Participation *par similitude* is always found in conjunction with and never independent from participation *par* composition. Limitation is had by means of real composition. On a theoretical level, Geiger's position seems to lead to understanding the Thomistic composition of essence and *esse* as if it were the result of the union of "*duae res*" by means of an efficient cause.

3) *Direct correspondence between judgment and esse*: Like the other authors, Geiger relies heavily on a *direct correspondence* between the two fundamental operations of the human mind, simple apprehension and judgment, and the two principles of finite *ens*: essence and *esse*. If the texts are isolated and considered by themselves, these youthful texts can lead some, as it has in the past, to consider essence and *esse* merely as two "states" of *ens* and not as two immanent principles of *ens*: the concrete, individual essence and the participated act of being. According to Fabro, the initial correspondence which can be affirmed between judgment and *esse* needs to be continued in a metaphysical reflection that determines *esse* as act of all acts and perfection of all perfections.

[30] See C. FABRO, *NMP*, 27.
[31] C. FABRO, *PC*, 52.

Fabro argues against Geiger that St. Thomas holds the exact opposite of his thesis: participation *par similitude* does not prescind from ontological composition. In fact, the similarity between *esse per essentiam* and *ens per participationem* is based on the fact that the first is simple and the latter is a composite. According to Fabro, this point is clear from the following text of St. Thomas:

> Conformity is the convenience in one form, […]. Hence in this way something is conformed to God which is likened to him. For it belongs to things to be said similar in two ways. Either from the fact that they participate in one form, as two white things in whiteness, and thus in every similarity, it is necessary to be composed from that in which it convenes with something similar, and from that in which they differ from this, as similitude is not unless there is a difference, according to Boethius (uncertain reference). Hence to God nothing can be similar or convenient or conformed, as found frequently in the sayings of the philosophers. Or from the fact that one which participatively has the form imitates that which essentially has it. As if the white body is said to be similar to separated whiteness or the fiery mixed body to fire itself. And such similiarity which places composition in one and simplicity in the other can be of the creature to God, which are participants in goodness, wisdom and so on, which in God is his essence[32].

Fabro holds that in light of this text and others it is clear that his division of participation into predicamental and transcendental is the primary one and that it is foundational with respect to the "reality" of similarity. The essence of metaphysical participation, he points out, always involves two things: "the causal dependence of the participant on the participated (dynamic participation) and composition of the participant with respect to the participated (static participation) which is such *per essentiam* and therefore

[32] *In I Sent*., d. 48, q. 1, a. 1: "Conformitas est convenientia in forma una, [...]. Unde hoc modo aliquid Deo conformatur quod sibi assimilatur. Contingit autem aliqua dici similia dupliciter. Vel ex eo quod participant unam formam, sicut duo albi albedinem; et sic omne simile oportet esse compositum ex eo in quo convenit cum alio simili, et ex eo in quo differt ab ipso, cum similitudo non sit nisi differentium, secundum Boetium. Unde sic Deo nihil potest esse simile nec conveniens nec conforme, ut frequenter a philosophis dictum invenitur. Vel ex eo quod unum quod participative habet formam, imitatur illud quod essentialiter habet. Sicut si corpus album diceretur simile albedini separatae, vel corpus mixtum igneitate ipsi igni. Et talis similitudo quae ponit compositionem in uno et simplicitatem in alio, potest esse creaturae ad Deum participantis bonitatem vel sapientiam vel aliquid hujusmodi, quorum unumquodque in Deo est essentia".

subsistent perfection"[33]. The Thomistic doctrine of *similitudo participata* is indicated by and given a foundation by means of composition. Here, Fabro argues that Geiger's affirmation that St. Thomas never uses participation by composition to demonstrate creation is blatantly false and offers a number of texts to support this affirmation[34]. Texts like *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 61, a. 1 and *De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 5 show: "that the composition of essence and *esse* is the constitutive characteristic of *ens per participationem* on which is founded its total dependence on *esse per essentiam* which is God: therefore there is an essential belonging together of the static (composition) and dynamic (dependence) moments in the adequate notion of participation"[35]. Fabro concludes that this belonging together of the static and dynamic moments of participation is at the foundation of Thomistic causality.

Par construens. After his "*pars destruens*", Fabro begins his "*pars construens*", affirming that in St. Thomas's metaphysics of *actus essendi*, participation as causality and participation as composition stand together[36]. Formal reflection on the essence is only a preparatory phase. The truth about being is only achieved in "the conclusive dialectic for the foundation of the truth itself which is expressed in the new concept of *esse*, which properly constitutes the ontological and metaphysical plane itself"[37]. Ultimately, judgment comes to bear on *existentia* or the factual reality and actuality of things, while metaphysical reflection is able to go further:

> When St. Thomas speaks of a correspondence between the fundamental operations of knowing, apprehension and judgment, and the two moments of essence and being, *esse* which thus constitutes the novelty of judgment has the *esse* of things as its foundation: this *esse* of things is to be understood *per se*

[33] C. FABRO, *PC*, 56-57.

[34] *In I Sent*., d. 8, q. 4, a. 1, *contra praetera*; *Summa contra Gentiles*, II, ch. 15; *Ibid.*, III, ch. 65, *adhuc*; and *Compendium Theologiae*, I, 68.

[35] C. FABRO, *PC*, 59. See I, q. 61, a. 1: Whether angels have a cause of their *esse*: "It must be affirmed that angels and all that is, except God, were made by God. God alone is His own *esse*; while in everything else the essence differs from the *esse*, as was shown above (I, q. 3, a. 4). From this it is clear that God alone is *ens* by his own essence: while all other things are *entia* by participation. Now whatever is by participation is caused by what is essentially; as everything ignited is caused by fire. Consequently the angels, of necessity, were made by God".

[36] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 60: "The dissociation of participation as causality (causal dependence) from participation as composition (first of all, of essence and *esse*) is opposed to the Thomistic position".

[37] C. FABRO, *PC*, 61.

> and immediately as the factual reality and as convenience of content according to the nature of judgment itself (existential and formal). From the analysis of judgment as such, as act-copula of the mind founded on the act-synthesis of things, this correspondence has to emerge. One should recognize that it is immediate perception, external and internal, which places us, first of all, in direct contact with *existence* or rather, with the *factual* reality and actuality of things: but with regard to what the nature of things *in se* is and the nature of existence in relation to essence is, this is the task of metaphysical reflection[38].

Metaphysical reflection has the task of radically and definitively determining *esse* according to its various meanings and of choosing, so to speak, which one is fundamental for the others. Such a reflection involves a convergence of several different planes of thought (objectual, perceptive, formal), arriving to *esse* as foundation and as "separated act *per essentiam*", and establishing the consequent, real composition of essence and participated *esse* in creatures[39].

At this point, Fabro asks: "Can we attempt some ulterior clarification and indicate an authentic experience of *esse* in its resolutive meaning of *actus essendi* or of principle that actuates the essence (*esse ut actus*) and as

[38] C. FABRO, *PC*, 60.

[39] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 62: "*Esse* as act of all acts, which constitutes the ultimate objectual plane, is certainly not extraneous to either the perceptive plane or the formal one of judgment; in a diverse way, moreover, it is their real foundation and the ultimate metaphysical notion. But this *esse* cannot have a proper and direct correspondence in either the perceptive sphere or in the formal one and consequently not in the logical sphere of the operations of knowing: rather, the inverse occurs; it is the point of convergence, of arrival and of foundation of all other aspects of being in its 'relationing' to reality; only in this way is the composition of essence and *esse* placed at the center of Thomistic metaphysics. It is for this reason that St. Thomas continually isolates it more and more in its absolute quality of 'separated act' *per essentiam*: this is also the reason why *esse* receives the essential and distinctive qualification of first and ultimate 'act' such that it is the only act that can and should exist 'separated' and is God himself, obtaining thus an incomparable metaphysical position. Creatures are insofar as they have participated *esse*, which is the profound act and quieting act which is *inaccessible* directly both in the perceptive sphere and the formal one: it is proper to metaphysical consideration and is exclusive to Thomistic metaphysics as we have mentioned and for the reasons which the following study, as I hope, will better clarify. That which is important, above all, in this introduction, was to make every effort to dissipate as far as possible any occasion for equivocation".

it is found in act in *ens*?"[40]. In answer, Fabro presents his solution of "metaphysical resolution" as the movement of the intellect from the first notion of *ens* to the determination of *esse* as the ultimate transcendental act. The text refers to two stages of metaphysical *resolutio*: from an initial notion of *ens* to a methodological notion of *ens*; from the latter to the determination of *esse* as ultimate transcendental act. The passage to the third stage is proper to St. Thomas:

> Between the first notion of *ens* at the dawn of knowing, and the technical one of *esse* of metaphysical *resolutio*, there is at least a double passage: above all from the initial confused notion of *ens* in general, to the methodological notion of *ens* as "*id quod est, quod habet esse*". Aristotle stops here, while St. Thomas proceeds to the determination of *esse* as the ultimate transcendental act, which is the proper and immediate object of divine causality[41].

Once again, Fabro stresses that the method of metaphysics is resolution and not intuition, abstraction or demonstration. *Esse ut actus* is apprehended through a process a "resolution" or "foundation" whereby *esse* "emerges" over all other acts (accidental act and formal act) and "emerges" in our consciousness:

> The method of Thomistic metaphysics is neither intuitive or demonstrative, but "resolutive", i.e., passing from vaguer to more proper determinations, from act to act, from potency to potency, from multiple and superficial acts to those that are more constant and, therefore, all the way to the ultimate and primary act which is *esse*. This form of "passing" is not demonstration or intuition, but could be called "foundation"; yet it cannot be without a certain experience or direct apprehension. Above all, it is clear, there is the direct apprehension of "passing" by means of which the process of "founding" is actuated; further, and consequently, such a process of foundation wouldn't have sense unless it implied the emergence of the ultimate act, *esse*, in consciousness, in which the process itself is quieted, since the process of forming it demands a certain type of apprehension of the point of arrival, of the way that it is solidly held[42].

Fabro's theory depends in part on the recognition of a distinction between two meanings of *esse*: *esse* as essence or formal act and *esse* as *actus*

[40] C. FABRO, *PC*, 62.
[41] C. FABRO, *PC*, 65.
[42] C. FABRO, *PC*, 66.

essendi[43]. *Esse* as *actus essendi*, by no means, should be confused with *existentia*.

In synthesis, *resolutio* is seen as a movement of the intellect from *ens* to *esse*, it is a metaphysical passage from accidental act to substantial form to *actus essendi*, and is linked to the problem of foundation. The general structure of metaphysical resolution is threefold: from an *initial* notion of *ens-esse* one passes to a *methodological* notion of *ens-esse* and eventually concludes in an *intensive* notion of *esse*.

2. The emergence of *esse* (*PC*, 214-238)

The methodological indications in the Introduction to *PC* on the inadequacy of judgment to grasp *actus essendi* and the necessity of metaphysical resolution and reduction are more fully developed in a section of *PC* entitled: "The Thomistic emergence of *esse*" (*PC*, 215-239). Here, Fabro is concerned with the passage from *ens* to *esse* in metaphysics, a passage which he calls "the path of truth". This path, he writes, is the development of *esse* in beings (*entia*); it is an intensification of *esse* in beings; it is an "ascension, progress, and fulfillment towards that fullness that *esse* is *in se* and *per se* from the beginning, but which is only manifested at the end, in the 'return' of *entia* to *esse*"[44]. The section is divided into three subsections: 1) the determinations of *ens*: *unum, verum, bonum* (216-221); 2) the transcendental perfections: *esse*, *vivere*, *intelligere* (221-228); and 3) the intentional structure of Thomistic *ens* (229-239).

Fabro does not offer any criteria for the division; therefore, it will be helpful to summarize what lies ahead in an attempt to grasp the overall structure of his argument. Fabro begins by pointing out that since *actus essendi* is in some way participated by beings (*entia*), it must be determined or contracted by their respective essences. The first subsection, then, deals with the three forms of determination in *De veritate*, q. 21, a. 1. The third form of determination corresponds to the way the transcendentals determine "*ens*", hence the title of the first subsection. Now, since *esse* can be viewed in two ways – either *formally*, as the actuality of the form (*actus formalis*) or *really*, as the participated act of a concrete *ens* (*actus essendi*) – the

[43] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 66: "From the synthesis implicated in the concept of *ens*, two meanings of *esse* come forth, one as essence and formal act and the other as *actus essendi* and both are most universal: in the experience of *ens ut ens*, there is the immediacy of some nature in act which has *esse*".

[44] C. FABRO, *PC*, 215.

transcendental determination of *esse* is considered in two ways. Accordingly, the second subsection deals primarily with the formal order and reflection on *esse* as *actus formalis*. Fabro shows that there is a dialectic between formal perfections and *esse*: in one respect, certain perfections (such as *vivere* and *intelligere*) are superior to *esse*, yet in another respect they are inferior to it. This reflection builds on the "formal resolution of the essence" outlined earlier in *NMP*. The third subsection – on the "intentional structure of *ens*" – takes up the "real resolution of *actus essendi*" (mentioned in *NMP*) and argues the need to come to the knowledge of God as *Esse per essentiam* in order to understand created *esse* and, ultimately, *ens*.

After arguing that the transcendentals pertain to the intensification of *ens*, Fabro turns to the intensification of *esse* and, consequently, to such perfections as *vivere* and *intelligere* (*PC*, 221-229). This highlights one of the key elements of metaphysical reflection as a *dual* resolution-reduction-emergence of *esse* as act and *esse* as perfection. Fabro's insights on the formal intensification of *esse* – in light of the pure perfections – are as follows.

1) Degrees of perfection according to essence. Fabro begins by outlining the general framework of the formal resolution. In metaphysics, the consideration of real, concrete beings on the ontological plane shows that they differ according to degrees of perfection (*magis et minus*): genera are differentiated into species, species actuated in individuals, individuals are subject to changes, and so on. The principle of *magis et minus* leads to the conclusion that essences have an intrinsic gradation of perfection which gives a structural meaning to the world and guarantees that our intellect can reach the truth of being[45].

2) From *esse commune* as "act of *ens*" to intensive *esse* as "act of all acts". For Fabro, the beginning and the end of metaphysical analysis coincide in *esse*: *esse commune* – as the most common act since it is the act of *ens* – is present at the beginning, yet manifests itself as "intensive *esse*" at the end[46]. *Ens* is the *primum cognitum* of the human intellect, while *esse ut actus* is achieved at the end of metaphysical reflection:

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[45] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 221-222.

[46] For a critique of this point, see R. MCINERNY, "*Esse ut Actus Intensivus* in the writings of Cornelio Fabro", *Proceedings of The American Catholic Philosophical Association* 38 (1964), 137-142. With regard to the determination of *ens*, McInerny writes: "It is surely difficult to get hold of the exact nature of the coincidence or identity of starting-point and point of arrival Fabro insists on". "Fabro tends to identify the two senses of *ens commune* that Aquinas is at some

> The point of view proper to metaphysical analysis is that the point of departure and its point of arrival effectively coincide: the beginning is *esse* as act of *ens* and the end is *esse* as act of acts and perfection of all perfections. *Esse* that is the most common act at the beginning is manifested at the end as the most intensive act which transcends all acts[47].

3) *Esse* as *actus formalis* and as *actus essendi*. The metaphysical process from *ens* to *esse* is characterized as an ascending dialectic, a movement of *magis et minus*, along the scale of perfection. To the distinction previously made between the *esse commune* as beginning of metaphysical reflection and intensive *esse* as terminus of metaphysical reflection, Fabro adds an intermediary distinction between *esse* as formal act and *esse* as *actus essendi*. This distinction is important in the paragraphs that follow since Fabro continually makes reference to and contrasts reflection on abstract-formal *esse* (formal act) and concrete-real *esse* (*actus essendi*).

The metaphysician, Fabro writes, moves from *ens* and comes to *esse* as the abstract (act) of *ens*. It is totally unique and ultimately refers to a

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pains to keep separate or, if he does not identify the two senses, Fabro suggests some kind of identity of reference as in the quoted remark on the coincidence of starting-point and term of metaphysical reflection. […] Fabro seems to want to make *esse commune*, *ens sine adiecto*, the most intensive". Secondly, McInerny doesn't agree with Fabro's interpretation of the relationship between *vivere* and *esse* in living beings. In accord with St. Thomas, Fabro interprets such perfections as acts which follow *per se* from or on the form. Thirdly, "Fabro badly describes what he is doing. In his appeal to Plato for an identification of the 'movement' of thought and the 'movement' of being he suggests that what is first in reality must be first in our discursive thought. The movement of metaphysics is such that it goes from *esse* to *esse* and ends by identifying the logical and real hierarchies". McInerny concludes: "My central misgiving about his treatment of *esse ut actus intensivus* is that, rather than retaining the proper mode of human understanding, which is multiple, complex, analytic, discursive, as the backdrop against which dialectical efforts to surmount these limitations can be not only corrected but, indeed, understood, he has reduced metaphysics to a dialectic of limits".

[47] C. FABRO, *PC*, 221-222. Fabro holds that St. Thomas reaches the notion of intensive *esse* through a confluence of Platonism and Aristotelianism: Platonic separatism can be directed to intensive *esse*, which is the unique, separated, subsisting form and constitutes the essence and definition of God; the Aristotelian immanentism of act in the potency (for example, the soul in the body) permits the notion of *esse* as participated act and, secondly, the absolute emergence of Pure Act which is the incommunicable quality of *Esse per essentiam*.

twofold act: *actus formalis* and *actus essendi*[48]. Both acts entail an ascending dialectic of *esse*. With regard to formal act: "The *actus formalis* presents the ascendant movement of *magis et minus* in the scale of predicamental perfection that brings us to the peak of the Summit, of the Optimum, of the Perfect…, which is *Esse* (Platonic dialectic)"[49]. With regard to *actus essendi*:

> *Actus essendi*, which in concrete things is revealed finite and participated, poses the necessity of its proper emergence as pure Act, the Simple, the First, which – thanks to its proper nature of intensive Act – gathers by surpassing and surpasses by conserving all the perfections that under it divide the forms of the real and close thus the circle of the truth according to Parmenides' principle in the fullness of its own absolute and indivisible unity[50].

4) The "formal, intensive moment". Having established this distinction between *esse* as formal act and *esse* as real act, the rest of this section concerns the intensification of *esse* as *actus formalis* or *esse essentiae*[51]. Fabro begins with a quote from St. Thomas to show that a formality is predicated more "intensively" when it is predicated essentially rather than by participation. In this way, it is necessary that what is in the caused is not in the cause in the same way, but rather in a more eminent way[52]. Fabro concludes that this type of reflection: "is the definitive form of

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[48] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 222: "Thus, from *ens* one arrives at *esse* as its abstract (act), which is, however, an entirely special abstract [act] for two reasons: insofar as it always means act and because it is able to mean a double act: *actus formalis* and *actus essendi*. The ascending dialectic of *esse* is contemporarily exercised on both fronts".

[49] C. FABRO, *PC*, 222.

[50] C. FABRO, *PC*, 222.

[51] The term "*esse essentiae*" is not used in the Scholastic sense which duplicates *esse* into an *esse* proper to the essence and an *esse* proper to *existentia* (*esse existentiae*).

[52] See *In I Sent*., d. 22, q. 1, a. 4 exp. textus: "Oportet [secundum Augustinum] assumere hoc pro medio, quod abstractum praedicetur magis quam concretum. Hoc autem sic intelligendum est, ut dicatur id esse majus quod verius rationem magnitudinis habet, et similiter albius, non quod plus habet de albedine, vel quod est magis proprie album, sed cui verius convenit ratio albedinis. Semper autem principalior praedicatio est quae est per essentiam, quam quae est per participationem. Et ideo albedo quae recipit praedicationem albedinis vere per modum essentialem, ut dicatur albedo est albedo, dicitur magis vere praedicationem albedinis recipere, quam res alba; quamvis non eodem modo

the principle of causality according to resolution by the passage to the limit of efficient cause in the formal cause and the consequent reduction of every relation of causality into the dialectic of participation"[53]. This passage to the limit from *ens* to *esse* embraces the entire itinerary of *magis et minus* in the sphere of *esse essentiae* and culminates in the absolute position of *Esse separatum*. At this point, however, the question is not asked whether or not this separated *esse* really exists.

5) Dialectic of perfection. In this consideration we see that while attribution of *ens* to something is certainly very important (since it includes *actus essendi*), *per se* it is also the poorest attribution since it can refer to the actuation of any reality, such as being a rock. Living things, for example, are said to be more perfect than minerals, animals more perfect than vegetables, intelligent beings more perfect than animals, angels, more perfect than men… Consequently, "in the *formal predicamental* sphere, *vivere* and *intelligere* are superior to *esse commune*", for *esse commune* is found in any order or degree of being[54]. The metaphysical rule for this relationship between the *esse* of initial *ens* and *esse* as supreme act is provided by St. Thomas's interpretation of Dionysius:

> Dionysius says that, although *esse* itself is more perfect than life itself, and life itself than wisdom itself, if they are considered as distinguished *secundum rationem*; nevertheless, a *vivens* is more perfect than *ens* as such, because a *vivens* is also an *ens* and a *sapiens* is both an *ens* and a living being. Although therefore *ens in se* does not include *vivens* and *sapiens*, because that which participates in *esse* need not participate in every mode of being; nevertheless God's *esse* includes in itself life and wisdom, because nothing of the perfection of being can be wanting to him who is Subsisting Being Itself[55].

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recipiat, quia rem albam dicimus albam, sed albedinem dicimus albedinem. Non enim quod est in causato, oportet esse in causa eodem modo, sed eminentiori; et sic exponit dionysius, sic dicens: vivere si quis dicat vitam, aut illuminari lumen, non recte secundum meam rationem dicit; sed secundum alium modum ista dicuntur: quia abundanter et substantialiter ea quae sunt causatorum, prius insunt causis; et dicit causam vitam vel lumen; causatum, vivens vel illuminatum".

[53] C. FABRO, *PC*, 223. These are the themes he will expound in Part Two of *PC* on predicamental and transcendental causality.

[54] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 225.

[55] I, q. 4, a. 2 ad 3: "Sicut in eodem capite idem Dionysius dicit, licet ipsum esse sit perfectius quam vita, et ipsa vita quam ipsa sapientia, si considerentur secundum quod distinguuntur ratione, tamen vivens est perfectius quam ens tantum, quia vivens etiam est ens; et sapiens est ens et vivens. Licet igitur ens non

In synthesis, Fabro distinguishes between *ens* (*esse*) *communiter acceptum* which is molded to the quality of the participants, and *esse simpliciter acceptum* which transcends all participations and all participants. *Esse simpliciter acceptum*, includes (*praehabet*) the entire perfection of being in itself and thus surpasses life and all subsequent perfections. However, *esse* considered as participated in this or that thing, which does not possess the whole perfection of being, is more excellent when another perfection is added[56].

6) The convergence of the dialectic of form and the dialectic of act. In the formal order, intellectuality is found at the summit of perfection, for a being is more perfect according to the degree of their intellectual nature[57]. In the real order (the order of act), on the contrary, one carries out the "passage to the limit" and *esse* becomes the plexus of all perfections and dominates all. *Esse* as *actus formalis* is at the summit of the predicamental, formal perfections; *esse* as *actus essendi* is found in concrete things and as such is participated; this, however, demands an emergence as *Esse per essentiam*. This is alluded to in the following text of St. Thomas from *De Potentia*:

> The mode of signification of the names we give things is consequent upon our mode of understanding: for names signify the concepts of our intellect […]. Now our intellect understands being according to the mode in which it finds it in things here below from which it gathers its knowledge, and wherein being is not subsistent but inherent. Now our reason tells us that there is a self-subsistent being: wherefore although the term being has a signification by way of concretion, yet our intellect in ascribing being to God soars above the mode

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includat in se vivens et sapiens, quia non oportet quod illud quod participat esse, participet ipsum secundum omnem modum essendi, tamen ipsum esse Dei includit in se vitam et sapientiam; quia nulla de perfectionibus essendi potest deesse ei quod est ipsum esse subsistens".

[56] See I-II, q. 2, a. 5 ad 2: "Esse simpliciter acceptum, secundum quod includit in se omnem perfectionem essendi, praeeminet vitae et omnibus subsequentibus, sic enim ipsum esse praehabet in se omnia subsequentia. Et hoc modo Dionysius loquitur. Sed si consideretur ipsum esse prout participatur in hac re vel in illa, quae non capiunt totam perfectionem essendi, sed habent esse imperfectum, sicut est esse cuiuslibet creaturae; sic manifestum est quod ipsum esse cum perfectione superaddita est eminentius. Unde et Dionysius ibidem dicit quod viventia sunt meliora existentibus, et intelligentia viventi bus".

[57] See *In II Sent*., d. 16, q. 1, a. 2.

> of its signification, and ascribes to God the thing signified, but not the mode of signification[58].

At this summit of metaphysical reflection, the two dialectics – the Platonic dialectic of form and the Aristotelian dialectic of Act – together in the affirmation of *Esse divinum* as the supreme reality. This satisfies the demand of the Parmenidean principle: "According to the Philosopher, there is an order of *prius et posterius* even in formal causes: so that nothing prevents a form resulting from the participation of another form: and thus God who is *Esse tantum*, is in a some way (*quodammodo*) the species of all subsistent forms that participate of *esse* but are not their own *esse*"[59]. The Parmenidean demand of the indivisibility and unity of *esse* in beings (*entia*) is satisfied in that God is "*quodammodo*" the species of all subsistent forms; these beings, even though they are "placed outside" (*existent*), do not continue to "remain outside" that *esse* which is *Esse ipsum* (God).

In the third subsection (*PC*, 229-239), which concerns more directly the resolution of participated *esse* to *Ipsum Esse Subsistens*, Fabro begins by restating the objective of *PC*: to consider the problems of causality as participation only insofar as they pertain to each other so as to clarify the surpassing of the opposed conceptions of Plato and Aristotle in the Thomistic conception of the intensive, emergent act of *esse*. In synthesis, *ens per participationem* demands the existence of *Ipsum Esse Subsistens*[60].

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[58] *De Potentia*, q. 7, a. 2 ad 7: "Modus significandi in dictionibus quae a nobis rebus imponuntur sequitur modum intelligendi; dictiones enim significant intellectuum conceptiones, [...]. Intellectus autem noster hoc modo intelligit esse quo modo invenitur in rebus inferioribus a quibus scientiam capit, in quibus esse non est subsistens, sed inhaerens. Ratio autem invenit quod aliquod esse subsistens sit: et ideo licet hoc quod dicunt esse, significetur per modum concretionis, tamen intellectus attribuens esse Deo transcendit modum significandi, attribuens Deo id quod significatur, non autem modum significandi".

[59] *De Potentia*, q. 6, a. 6 ad 5: "Secundum Philosophum, etiam in causis formalibus prius et posterius invenitur; unde nihil prohibet unam formam per alterius formae participationem formari; et sic ipse Deus, qui est esse tantum, est quodammodo species omnium formarum subsistentium quae esse participant et non sunt suum esse". See C. FABRO, *PC*, 227-228.

[60] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 229: "This 'pure intensive' which Plato called the separated Good and Aristotle the separated Intellect, for St. Thomas (as also and in its own way, for Hegel) is *ipsum esse subsistens*. If, in fact, one sees that *ens per participationem* exist, there should exist *Esse ipsum* (*Sein selbst*), as its transcendent and immanent principle".

The existence of *ens per participationem* is immediately "given", yet the first notion of *ens* is a confused one. From the beginning, then, the first notion contains an initial, confused, constitutive distinction in the form of an implicit synthesis. The ulterior, metaphysical determinations do not occur from without; thus, it is by means of a process of metaphysical reflection, which Fabro calls *reductio*, and thanks to the principle of non-contradiction that the confused determinations (which are immediately present) and reduced to the distinct determinations according to the requirements of the structure of being. This is neither an abstraction nor a demonstration. It is rather a "comprehensive reflection" which clarifies the being of *ens* in *esse* as originary act[61]. This reference to *esse* as *actus essendi* establishes *ens* as the foundation of the first principles of being and knowing.

Ens is the *primum cognitum* of our intellect and the primary object of our mind. "In metaphysical reflection, *ens* expands into substance and accidents, essence and existence, essence and *esse*, *ens per participationem* and *Esse per essentiam*…; this 'Diremtion' of *ens* is the only valid one, since it is intrinsic to the very foundation of the truth of the being of *ens* in its giveness, but it unfolds diversely in the various couplets just now indicated"[62]. Fabro distinguishes the type of metaphysical reflection that pertains to the principal couplets of the predicamental and transcendental level:

a) In the predicamental couplet of substance and accidents, the two members are found on the same plane of being and accident refers to substance. Both substance and accidents are immediately given to consciousness – substance through intellectual apprehension; accidents through sensitive apprehension; yet both through perception. This "*Diremtion*" concerns the essence and the formal determination of *ens*.
b) In the couplet of the transcendental division (*ens per participationem* and *esse per essentiam*) the members of the division are at the antipodes of the quality of being and thus are found also at the antipodes for the form of real apprehension: if then one places the knowledge of the existence of "*esse per essentiam*" it will be by means of the knowledge of the existence of *ens per participationem* and viceversa. For the finite, human intellect, what is immediate is

[61] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 229.
[62] C. FABRO, *PC*, 231-232.

> concrete experience which opens up to a metaphysical reduction to foundation[63].

In his explanation of the second couplet, Fabro alludes to the way in which the knowledge of one member enlightens the other. Our knowledge of the existence and essence of God as *Esse per essentiam* constitutes the ultimate term of knowledge and pertains to mediated knowledge, i.e., knowledge that is obtained by demonstration *per aliud*. This *aliud* is *ens per participationem*, which is finite and is the proper object of our intellect[64].

This, however, does not mean that the finite is immediately qualified by the intellect as *ens per participationem* in the technical sense of the term. The technical term pertains to an ultimate determination and is based on the reflections of metaphysical analysis. Not all knowledge is demonstrative: the existence of the "finite" is immediately given to consciousness through the presence of the contents of experience. *Ens* refers to *esse* just as the concrete refers to its act. Considered from the perspective of "content", the *esse* of *ens* is its essence; from the perspective of "act", it is called "*existence*" (at the empirical, phenomenological level) and "*esse*" (as principle and first metaphysical act of realization). In the lengthy paragraph that follows, Fabro points out that the metaphysical determination of *ens per participationem* does not have an immediate, direct reference to experience, and is obtained in metaphysical reflection, a process of "reduction" guided by the principle of "separated perfection":

> Therefore, if the phenomenological analysis or reduction of experience brings us to distinguish between essence (content) and existence (fact), reality and its realization: metaphysical reflection or reduction discovers the distinction or "Diremtion" between essence and *esse*, as potency and act. This is the supreme distinction (and composition) for the foundation of the real in its determination as *ens per participationem*; this determination certainly does not pretend to have an immediate and direct reference to experience as that of substance and accidents, of essence and existence. This, however, does not means that the determination of *ens per participationem* is the fruit of demonstration: it "is shown" at the depths of *ens*, or rather by means of the process of the "reduction" of *ens* to *esse* in the first phase of ascendant metaphysical reflection which is that of the manifestation of the *esse* of *ens*. The Thomistic distinction, therefore, of essence and *esse*, on which the definitive determination of *ens participationem* is founded on – comes from – the very

[63] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 232.
[64] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 232. Fabro refers to *In Librum De Causis*, lect. 6.

> "resolution" of the *esse* of *ens* that St. Thomas expressed by means of the principle of "*perfectio separata*"[65].

In this determination, the essence which is identical to *esse* escapes our experience, thus, its existence must be demonstrated. On the other hand, the determination of the essence which is not *esse* as *ens per participationem* is not a demonstration. If one had to demonstrate reality and the presence of *ens per participationem*, this would mean that thought does not begin with *ens*, but rather with something else. Nothing, however, is or can be previous to *ens* or outside of *ens*[66].

Determining *esse* as *actus essendi* cannot consist in a *simplex apprehensio* or the result of an abstractive process. *Esse* is the act of all acts and not a content. The determination of *esse*, rather, "is achieved by convergent degrees of reflection and investigation"[67]. Fabro distinguishes three stages in this reflection.

a) Phenomenological *esse*: "The beginning of this reflection on *esse* is the awareness of reality, of the effectuality of experience itself: […]. This is phenomenological *esse* as fact of existing: it is metaphysically neutral, since the problem of the structure of *ens* is not yet posed or resolved"[68]. As we saw in *Percezione e pensiero*, phenomenological *esse* (existence) indicates a distinction between real being and essence as formal content. In this pre-philosophical phase, it can mean reality in act, substance in act, form (substantial or accidental) in act, i.e., that which is commonly called "existence"[69].

b) Logical-formal *esse*: The next step, called by Fabro "logical-formal" is directly connected to the first and belongs to the theoretical sphere. This step concerns "the determination of *esse* as the determination of the content of *ens* in the sense of whatever substantial or accidental form: it is the '*esse hominis*' and '*esse musici*'… which respectively indicate the actuality by which each is said to be man or musician and not horse or architect"[70]. This determination of *esse* follows upon reflection on the contents of abstraction and makes judgments regarding the essence possible.

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[65] C. FABRO, *PC*, 233.

[66] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 233.

[67] C. FABRO, *PC*, 234.

[68] C. FABRO, *PC*, 234.

[69] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 234.

[70] C. FABRO, *PC*, 234. In his footnote, Fabro affirms that this is the meaning of Aristotle's τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι.

Fabro holds that the *esse* mentioned in texts such as *In Boethii De Trinitate*, q. 5, a. 3: "*Secunda vero operatio respicit ipsum esse rei*", should be interpreted in this way. For Fabro, this *esse* is not directly and properly *esse* as the act of the essence, but rather, as the continuation of the text highlights, the *esse* that corresponds to the affirmation or negation of something in either the formal order (judgments of essence) or the real order (judgments of existence):

> The *esse* in question is that of the "synthesis", the act of every synthesis: one affirms that to every mental synthesis (logical truth) there should correspond, directly or indirectly, a real synthesis, given that the truth and falsity (of judgment) expresses the relation of conformity and non-conformity: "Now, since the truth of the intellect results from its conformity with the thing, it is clear that in this second operation the intellect cannot truthfully abstract what is united in reality, because the abstraction would signify a separation with regard to the very being of the thing. For example, if I abstract man from whiteness by saying, 'Man is not white,' I signify that there is a separation in reality. So if in reality man and whiteness are not separate, the intellect will be false"[71]. Therefore, we are dealing with the fact that to the *esse* (or *non-esse*) of (logical) attribution there should correspond an *esse* (or *non-esse*) of real belonging which is *esse in actu*, whatever be the plane of being, substantial or accidental, *per se* or *per accidens*: for this reason, one distinguishes a "*veritas intellectus*", i.e, a logical truth, and a "*veritas rei*" or ontological truth, according to the entire sphere of being itself[72].

[71] *In Boethii De Trinitate*, q. 5, a. 3: "Et quia veritas intellectus est ex hoc quod conformatur rei, patet quod secundum hanc secundam operationem intellectus non potest vere abstrahere quod secundum rem coniunctum est, quia in abstrahendo significaretur esse separatio secundum ipsum esse rei, sicut si abstraho hominem ab albedine dicendo: homo non est albus, significo esse separationem in re. Unde si secundum rem homo et albedo non sint separata, erit intellectus falsus".

[72] C. FABRO, *PC*, 235. Fabro points out a text in which St. Thomas clarifies that the *esse* to which the nexus of a judgment is related can also not be real, but merely a mental apprehension: "Secundum Avicennam, de eo quod nullo modo est, non potest aliquid enuntiari: ad minus enim oportet quod illud de quo aliquid enuntiatur, sit apprehensum; et ita habet aliquod esse ad minus in intellectu apprehendente; et ita constat quod semper veritati respondet aliquod esse; *nec oportet quod semper respondeat sibi esse in re extra animam*, cum ratio veritatis compleatur in ratione animae" (*In I Sent.*, d. 19, q. 5, a. 1 ad 5). Fabro concludes that this concerns a real formal *esse*, a real functional *esse*, to which one can refer in order to found the synthesis of judgment.

This *esse rei* is a real, formal *esse* and indicates the nature of the thing and its mode of being in a global way. Fabro argues that although St. Thomas has the real distinction in mind when he wrote these texts, it is also true that "the distinction between the first and second operation of the intellect and the foundation of the predicative function of judgment in a realistic conception, like the Aristotelian, does not presupposes the admission of the real distinction, but can stop […] at the predicamental compositions of matter and form, substance and accidents"[73]. From this one can conclude that from the distinction of the two fundamental operations of the intellect, *esse* does not emerge as intensive act: "Thus, the two respective methods, *abstractio* and *separatio*, cannot give us at this level, that concept which expresses the ultimate and supreme determination of act"[74].

c) *Esse ut actus*. The ultimate determination of *esse* must free it from the multiplicity of meanings of *being-in-act* and from the meaning of synthesis of judgment: "The ultimate reference of this multiplicity of meanings of this 'being-in-act' in Thomism, and therefore the ultimate foundation of the truth of judgment, is *esse* understand as *act*"[75]. Fabro notes that only a very mature metaphysical reflection is able to clarify and distinguish this *esse* from the other meanings of *esse*. The *ens* which is accessible to the human mind, in this life, is that of *ens per participationem*, i.e., *ens* as synolon of essence and *esse*. Our "intellect passes from the initial confused notion of *ens* to the comprehension (by means of abstraction) of the essences, in order to return time and time again to a more precise

[73] C. FABRO, *PC*, 237. See *In I Sent*., d. 38, q. 1, a. 3: "Cum in re duo sint, quidditas rei, et esse ejus, his duobus respondet duplex operatio intellectus. Una quae dicitur a philosophis formatio, qua apprehendit quidditates rerum, quae etiam dicitur indivisibilium intelligentia. Alia autem comprehendit esse rei, componendo affirmationem, quia etiam esse rei ex materia et forma compositae, a qua cognitionem accipit, consistit in quadam compositione formae ad materiam, vel accidentis ad subjectum". Fabro concludes that in the text, "the act of the synthesis of judgment corresponds and, therefore, is founded on the *esse* which results from the predicamental, Aristotelian compositions" (*PC*, 237).

[74] C. FABRO, *PC*, 237.

[75] C. FABRO, *PC*, 236. *In I Sent*., d. 19, q. 5, a. 1: "Cum autem in re sit quidditas ejus et suum esse, veritas fundatur in esse rei magis quam in quidditate, sicut et nomen entis ab esse imponitur; et in ipsa operatione intellectus accipientis esse rei sicut est per quamdam similationem ad ipsum, completur relatio adaequationis, in qua consistit ratio veritatis. Unde dico, quod ipsum esse rei est causa veritatis, secundum quod est in cognitione intellectus".

determination of *ens* as the synolon of essence and *esse*"[76]. Metaphysical reflection, then, is a continual process of returning to *ens*. The definitive and ultimate foundation of the notion of *ens per participation* refers to the real composition of essence and *esse*: "This ultimate foundation is attributed to reason and can be considered as the fulfillment of the 'ways' for the demonstration of the existence of God and the passage to absolute 'transcendence'"[77]. As we saw in Fabro's article on the Fourth Way, *ens per participationem* – insofar as it is presented as contingent and limited – pertains to immediate, apprehensive thought. Insofar as it is presented in its ultimate determination and in reference to its ultimate Cause – *ens per participationem* pertains to the *terminus* of a process of metaphysical reflection:

> The definitive "Diremtion" of *ens per participationem* and of *Esse per essentiam* comes last, namely, it requires a more or less complicated process of metaphysical reflection: in reality, it is a process of "return" or of a taking explicit possession on the part of the mind of that which is implicitly given in the confused *ens* of the first apprehension. It is therefore a process of "clarification", of "ostentation", which is an appropriation of *ens* in itself which is already given and present to consciousness in its actuality from the beginning[78].

The definitive distinction between *ens per participationem* and *Esse per essentiam* requires metaphysical reflection, i.e., "bringing out" the *esse* which is implicit in the first grasp of *ens* and clarifying the confused, initial apprehension of *ens* in light of the "*Diremtion*" between *ens per participationem* and *esse per essentiam.* Metaphysics, then, starts from *ens commune* and eventually opens up to two members: the creature as *ens per participationem* and God as *esse per essentiam*. The problem of causality is clarified in light of intensive *esse – esse* in its intensive meaning of act of all acts and perfection of all perfections – which constitutes the resolutive meaning of *ens in quantum est ens*[79].

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[76] C. FABRO, *PC*, 238.

[77] C. FABRO, *PC*, 238, n. 2. See *De Potentia*, q. 7, a. 2 ad 7.

[78] C. FABRO, *PC*, 238-239.

[79] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 204. See also, *PC*, 213: "The originality of Thomistic metaphysics has its fulcrum in this 'passage to the limit of Aristotelian functional being' to *esse subsistens*, namely in this *metaphysical promotion* of Aristotelian *esse formale*, which is not yet, to *esse reale subsistens* (God) who always is and above all is and who gives being and existence to all the other beings. […] Thus,

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In summary, Fabro's metaphysical *resolutio* takes place within the reduction of *ens* to *esse* by means of an intensification or clarification of *ens* in *esse*. This reduction is an ascending reflection which comprehends the principle of the emergence of act, the movement of reason through predicamental perfections and the principle of "separated perfection". This reflection includes a dialectical comparison between the formal order and the real order and ends in the affirmation or determination of *esse* as the act of all acts and perfection of all perfections. The concrete, finite *ens* of experience is definitively or ultimately clarified in light of the metaphysical distinction between *ens per participationem* and *Esse per essentiam*. This involves the foundation of participated *esse* on *Ipsum Esse per se Subsistens* and the real distinction between essence and *esse* in creatures and subordination of essence to *esse* according to the principle of the emergence of act and the dialectic of participation.

3. Metaphysical reflection and predicamental causality (*PC*, 330-358)

In this section we are concerned above all with Fabro's thoughts on metaphysical reflection in regard to the problem of predicamental causality. Although Fabro's explicit references to metaphysical reflection are sparse, one of the main problems of metaphysics – the causal relationship between form and *esse* – is dealt with extensively. Fabro ultimately seeks to provide insight into the problem of the relationship between the intrinsic, formal causality of *esse* (*forma dat esse*) and extrinsic, divine (efficient and exemplary) causality.

This section on predicamental causality is somewhat difficult to place along the metaphysical itinerary proposed by Fabro. In a first moment, it seems that the problem of predicamental causality (univocal, formal causality of *fieri*) can be and should be considered in an intermediate phase between the initial recognition of the distinction between a substance's essence (form) and *esse*[80] and the search for an ultimate, transcendental

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Thomism begins where Aristotelianism ends, insofar as, thanks to the concept of creation, it posits that the essence is not the ultimate founding [principle] but in its turn, is founded on *esse* according to a double and radical originary '*Diremtion*'".

[80] Fabro holds that a true understanding of the real distinction between essence and *actus essendi* is achieved most properly at the end of metaphysical

foundation for the distinction (according to *extrinsic* causality). In this case, such a consideration is limited to the problem of the dynamic-causal relationship between form and *esse* within the structure and action of finite *ens*. Just as the consideration of static, *predicamental* participation led to static, *transcendental* participation, so also does the consideration of dynamic, *predicamental* causality (becoming) lead to and point to the need for dynamic, *transcendental* causality (creation)[81].

In a second moment – and this is the perspective Fabro appears to adopt in *PC*, 355-372 – instead of considering the causal relationship between form and *esse* as *structural* principles, we can also consider the relationship between formal causality (the determination of *esse* by form) and divine causality (creation and the production of *esse*, conservation and divine motion). At this point, metaphysical reflection presupposes the demonstration of the existence of a First Cause, who is *Esse per Essentiam* and is the only being capable of creating. Thus, these reflections take on the form of an ultimate clarification of something seen earlier *sub quaedam confusionem* and pertain most properly to the final stages of metaphysical reflection. In this section, then, I will consider the first aspect of the problem: the causal relationship between form and *esse*.

Fabro begins by distinguishing predicamental causality from transcendental causality. In St. Thomas's conception of predicamental being, Peter is not just an "*ens*" *per participationem*, he is also, in some way, a "man" *per participationem*. And this for two reasons: insofar as he is a man and not humanity and insofar as he is "*this*" man who has these human perfections and qualities and not others. As we saw earlier in *NMP*, every species or nature expresses a certain fullness or ontological completeness which individuals realize in limited and diverse ways (this is the nature of Fabro's notion of univocal, predicamental participation). The individual man, when it generates another individual man, does not produce humanity as such, but only *this* humanity: for example, Peter, insofar as he is Paul's father, is the cause of Paul's humanity.

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reflection, after a determination of God as *Ipsum Esse Subsistens* and the creature as *ens per participationem*. Therefore, I use the term "distinction" without qualifying it as "real" and the term *esse* without further qualification to indicate this intermediate state in our understanding of the real distinction. Fabro argues that many Christian philosophers, such as Boethius, spoke of a distinction between *forma* and *esse* without clarifying it as a real distinction or determining *esse* as *actus essendi*.

[81] For a more detailed explanation, see J. AERTSEN, *Nature and Creature*.

This type of causality, according to Fabro, is properly called "predicamental causality". Thus, Peter causes Paul's human nature and humanity in its *particular becoming*, but does not cause humanity as such[82]. To account for the difference between the causality of the finite agent (creature) and that of the infinite agent (Creator), Fabro argues that Aquinas makes a distinction between two genera of causes in accordance with the two levels of being – predicamental and transcendental. Predicamental causality concerns the *univocal* cause of becoming and the cause of the individual. Transcendental causality concerns the *analogical* cause of being and the cause of the entire species[83]. Predicamental causality is linked to movement; transcendental causality is linked to being. The latter can influence movement, yet is not necessarily linked to it or exhausted in it.

Fabro writes that introducing this distinction between predicamental and transcendental causality can be problematic: "The fundamental demand of predicamental causality of founding itself on a horizontal communication of actuality – form causes form, the composite another composite – seems blocked by the metaphysical demand of participation which demands the ontological *emergence* of the cause, which has the act *per essentiam*, over the effect, which has the act *per participationem*"[84]. In other words, the distinction could make it seem that, in Thomism, we have two different considerations of causality which constitute two distinct causal planes which do not communicate with one another. This, however, is not the case: Aquinas overcame the problems inherent in Avicenna's radical *separation* of two causal planes. In St. Thomas's conception, the substantial form is called first act. As such the substantial form not only gives matter its specific act, but also gives it all the other formalities that such an act presupposes. For example, due to the unity of substantial form, man's soul gives a man rationality (man's specific act), animality and corporeality (perfections of the predicamental order) and life, intelligence and *esse*

[82] See I, q. 46, a. 1 ad 6: "Aliter enim est intelligendum de agente particulari, quod praesupponit aliquid, et causat alterum, et aliter de agente universali, quod producit totum. Sicut agens particulare producit formam, et praesupponit materiam, unde oportet quod formam inducat secundum proportionem ad debitam materiam. Unde rationabiliter in ipso consideratur quod inducit formam in talem materiam et non in aliam, ex differentia materiae ad materiam. Sed hoc non rationabiliter consideratur in Deo, qui simul producit formam et materiam, sed consideratur rationabiliter in eo, quod ipse producit materiam congruam formae et fini".

[83] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 326.

[84] C. FABRO, *PC*, 328.

(perfections of the transcendental order)[85]. In this way, St. Thomas's doctrine concerning the unity of substantial form provides the nexus in which the two planes of causality communicate with one another.

At this point, though, a second problem arises regarding the causal communication of act by form. As substantial act, the form would consequently and apparently be the principle and cause of every degree of actuality of being in both the substantial and accidental orders; at the same time, however, we have seen that *esse*, not form, is the intensive act *par excellence*. As intensive act, *esse* is the actuating act of all other acts and forms. How, then, can the causality of these two acts – form and *esse* – be reconciled and in what way is the form said to be the cause of being?

Fabro notes that it is here – in the interpretation of the Aristotelian principle "*forma dat esse*" – that the problem of causality requires a decisive clarification[86]. Fabro introduces the theme by contrasting the Aristotelian, Boethian and Thomistic interpretations of the principle "*forma dat esse*". For Aristotle, "*forma dat esse*" means that every form determines every real thing in its proper species and thus makes the individual exist according to its proper nature[87]. For Boethius, the principle means that the form actuates the concrete not only as formal act, but also in the real order[88]. Fabro holds that this Boethian conception agrees with Platonism, which identified *reality* with form, and Aristotelianism, which makes *act* coincide with form. For St. Thomas, the formula "*forma dat esse*" is valid in the essential order (as act of matter) and in the order of being (as realizing principle), yet pertains properly to the predicamental order and not the transcendental order: "The form is the determinative principle and, therefore, properly constitutive principle of the real essence since it is the act of matter, and is the realizing principle (the act) in the real order, since all the activities of the concrete come to a head in the first act of the substance which is the form. But in the transcendental order, the form is not *esse*, which is *actus essendi*, which proceeds by participation from God"[89].

To support his interpretation and bring out the novelty of St. Thomas's proposal concerning "formal causality", Fabro traces the development of the principle "*forma dat esse*" in 54 of St. Thomas's texts, ranging from his early *De ente et essentia* and *Commentary on Peter Lombard's Sentences* to

[85] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 328-329.
[86] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 331.
[87] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 333.
[88] See BOETHIUS, *Quomodo Trinitas unus Deus*, ch. 2, *PL*, 64, 1250b.
[89] C. FABRO, *PC*, 335.

his mature thought found in *De substantiis separatis*. After this lengthy textual analysis, Fabro makes several conclusions which can be summarized as follows:

1) Form is the formal, and not efficient, principle of *esse*: In this sense, "*Forma dat esse*" means that the form provides the formal, constitutive act of the essence. This takes into consideration the clear distinction between the agent as the *effective* principle of *esse* and the form as the *formal* principle of *esse*: "*Est autem duplex causa essendi*: *scilicet forma per quam aliquid actu est*, *et agens quod facit actu esse*"[90]. As the formal principle of *esse* in material substances, the form gives *esse* to matter.
2) There is a causal dependence of participated *esse* on form: In this sense, "*Forma dat esse*" means that there is a true, intrinsic and derivative relationship between the form and *esse* as *actus essendi*. The *esse* of the thing depends on its efficient cause insofar as it depends on the form of the thing made[91]. In this case, the form acts as the "mediator" of *esse*: "God makes natural *esse* in us by creation; not by any agent cause, but, rather, by means of some formal cause"[92]. It is through the form that the substance relates to the first principle and that matter and *ens* participate in *esse*: "by the form the substance is made the proper recipient of being"[93].

In other words, for an *ens* to exist, it should be something determinate *in se* and that the determining principle is the substantial form as formal act. On a more profound level, however, form is called the cause of *esse* as *actus essendi* once it is understood that form presupposes the primary causality of God and the secondary action of efficient causality[94].

After his textual analysis of the principle "*forma dat esse*" and "*forma est causa essendi*", Fabro embarks on a more speculative analysis of the relationship between the causality of form and the emergence of *esse*, this

[90] *In Librum De Causis*, lect. 26. See C. FABRO, *PC*, 341: Fabro calls this text the most complete and mature formula.

[91] See *De Potentia*, q. 5, a. 1: "Secundum hoc ergo esse rei factae dependet a causa efficiente secundum quod dependet ab ipsa forma rei factae".

[92] *De Veritate*, q. 27, a. 1 ad 3.

[93] *Summa Contra Gentiles*, II, 55: "Per formam enim substantia fit proprium susceptivum eius quod est esse".

[94] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 344-345.

relationship is considered on two levels: the predicamental and the transcendental[95]. Fabro writes: "Causality or the derivation of *esse* has two moments, one immanent with respect to form and one transcendent with respect to the efficient cause"[96]. While one can never say that *forma sequitur materiam*, one can say that *esse sequitur formam*. *Esse*, when it is pure and "separated", i.e., *Ipsum Esse Subsistens*, it is act *in se* and *per se* and has no need of any other act. Participated *esse*, on the contrary, "'has fallen' in the *Diremtion* of the ontological difference and, therefore, is no longer sufficient *in se*. If the form of material forms needs matter as subject, so also – and even more so – *esse* needs form or the formal act as its potency"[97]. Thus, in St. Thomas's conception, both form and *esse* are constitutive principles of beings: the form is the first, determinative and constitutive act of the essence, yet is an *actuated* act; *esse*, on the other hand, is the actuating act of all forms and acts in a finite *ens*[98].

4. Metaphysical reflection and transcendental causality

This section deals with two problems: first, the relationship between predicamental causality and transcendental causality (4.1) and, second, the derivation of created *ens* from God (4.2): the first problem corresponds to *Partecipazione e causalità*, 355-396 (*Participation et causalité*, 363-374 and 468-488)[99]; the second problem is mentioned or dealt with in several texts throughout *PC*.

4.1 Predicamental causality and transcendental causality

As mentioned earlier, the reflections that follow presuppose the demonstration of the existence of God as First Cause and *Primum Ens*. In

[95] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 349: "In the predicamental order, St. Thomas can bring *forma* and *esse* together up to the point of an immediate correspondence and, therefore, up to the point of affirming the intrinsic derivation of *esse* from the form; in the transcendental order, on the other hand, the situation is reversed: in the creature, *forma* and *esse* are as potency and act that are really distinct; form exists in virtue of its participation of *esse* which it receives in itself".

[96] C. FABRO, *PC*, 349.

[97] C. FABRO, *PC*, 350.

[98] C. FABRO, *PC*, 354.

[99] This is possibly one of the reasons behind the re-structuring of the Italian edition: that of joining together two texts from the French version on the same problem.

fact, Fabro's opening lines in the subsection contrast the causality proper to the form with God's causality. He notes that in Aquinas's mature writings, the causality of form is increasingly limited to its role in the *formal* determination of the essence, while the efficient derivation of participated *esse* is directly referred to and reserved to God[100]. On the transcendental level, *esse* emerges as first and absolute act, while essence falls to potency; form, however, may be called the "metaphysical intermediary"[101] in the communication of participated *esse* by *Esse per Essentiam*[102]. Once again, form is considered in two ways: as the constitutive, essential act of *ens* and as the receptive principle of participated *esse*. Fabro argues that although St. Thomas's texts establish a clear distinction between the meaning of the principle "*forma dat esse*" in the order of formal causality and in that of efficient causality, the two "causal planes" (predicamental and transcendental) correspond to one another in an "open" fashion. On the one hand, the predicamental agent is truly the integral, productive cause of its effect; on the other, there are real acts and perfections in the production of the effect (such as animality, life, intelligence, *esse*), which are participated though the predicamental action of the individual in the effect, but which transcend the individual both as subject and as agent. Two questions arise here: "Up to what point and within what limits does the predicamental

[100] Fabro argues that there is a development in St. Thomas doctrine of causality: 1) from an Avicennian-based distinction between *causa fiendi* and *causa essendi*; 2) to a more Aristotelian causality which attributes the integral (though derived) causality of *esse* to form; 3) to "a clear distinction between the formal causality of *esse* which is proper to substantial form, and the efficient causality [of *esse*], which, by the participation of the form, is attributed to the generator, and, by participation proper to *esse*, is reserved to God" (*PC*, 357).

[101] To confirm his interpretation of form as "metaphysical intermediary", Fabro quotes St. Thomas's *De substantiis separatis*, ch. 8: "Invenitur igitur in substantia composita ex materia et forma duplex ordo: unus quidem ipsius materiae ad formam; alius autem ipsius rei iam compositae ad esse participatum. Non enim est esse rei neque forma eius neque materia ipsius, sed aliquid adveniens rei *per formam*. Sic igitur in rebus ex materia et forma compositis, materia quidem secundum se considerata, secundum modum suae essentiae habet esse in potentia, et hoc ipsum est ei ex aliqua participatione primi entis; caret vero, secundum se considerata, forma, per quam participat esse in actu secundum proprium modum".

[102] *De substantiis separatis*, ch. 8: "Modus autem uniuscuiusque substantiae compositae ex materia et forma, est secundum formam, per quam pertinet ad determinatam speciem. Sic igitur res composita ex materia et forma, per suam formam fit participativa ipsius esse a Deo secundum quemdam proprium modum".

action produce realities and universal perfections? In what way, above all, is the influence of the transcendental cause continued and explicated in the predicamental cause and in what way does the latter correspond to the former?"[103] Here, the problem is now focused on *how* the predicamental and transcendental planes of causality communicate with one another.

In St. Thomas's solution, the substantial form is determined as the *proximate* cause of the production of the form that is generated. At the same time: "The emergence of the superior formalities and transcendental perfections reveals a more profound dependence which the immediate agent has in the superior order with respect to a more universal Cause"[104]. The proximate agent and its substantial form are the cause of the effect and of all the formalities which pertain to the effect. The proximate agent, though, is not the cause of each formality in the same way. This can be seen in the example Fabro proposes of the causal relationship between Peter (father) and Paul (son): 1) as an individual agent, Peter is the cause of the individual humanity of Paul; 2) insofar as Peter pertains to and is linked to the system of the universal causes of the cosmos, Peter is the cause of the other predicamental formalities (animality, corporeity…) in Paul; 3) insofar as Peter himself receives the causality of the *vivere*, *intelligere*, and *esse per essentiam*, Peter is also the cause of the transcendental perfections in Paul. With these distinctions in mind, Fabro summarizes his proposal concerning the correspondence between dynamic causality and the structural constitution of a being on both the predicamental and transcendental levels:

> Thus, the dynamic planes of causality correspond to the constitutive planes of structure: to the predicamental compositions of substance and accidents and matter and form correspond the predicamental causality of the substantial form as profound act to which the accidental changes relate in the sphere of the individual and the substantial changes in the sphere of species and genus; to the transcendental composition of essence and *esse* correspond in Thomism, the total dependence of the creature on the Creator, both in being and in action[105].

Graphically this particularly dense paragraph can be represented as follows:

[103] C. FABRO, *PC*, 358.
[104] C. FABRO, *PC*, 359.
[105] C. FABRO, *PC*, 358-359.

<table>
<tr><th colspan="5">Predicamental level</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Causality</td><td></td><td colspan="2">Compositions
(real and formal-notional)</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="4">Causality of the substantial form</td><td rowspan="2">Accidental change and multiplicity</td><td rowspan="2">:</td><td>Substance</td><td>Accidents</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Individual</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Substantial change and multiplicity</td><td rowspan="2">:</td><td>Matter</td><td>Form</td></tr>
<tr><td>Genus</td><td>Species</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="5">Transcendental level</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Causality</td><td></td><td colspan="2">Composition</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Total dependence of the creature on the Creator in being and action</td><td>:</td><td>Essence (Form)</td><td>Esse</td></tr>
</table>

As Fabro's texts argue, the Thomistic doctrine of the unicity of substantial form and the determination of form as "metaphysical intermediary" (both as cause and as constitutive principle) avoids an artificial, precarious bifurcation of causality into two incommunicable spheres.

At this point, Fabro turns to the determination of transcendental causality, which deals with the analogical causality of *esse*. Three moments may be distinguished in this causality:

[1] *creation* as initial constitution of being;
[2] *conservation* of created things in being;
[3] *divine motion* in created things in their operation[106].

Fabro concentrates almost exclusively on the problem of creation. For St. Thomas, he notes, creation is a truth that can be demonstrated in an apodictic way through reason alone. Fabro holds that in St. Thomas's mature works, the arguments used to demonstrate creation as the production of *esse* from nothing are based on participation. Secondly, *esse* as intensive act is seen as the proper object or terminus of creation. In terms of causality this means two things: first, as regards the agent, every agent acts insofar as it has *esse* which makes it subsist in its own form, which is the immediate principle (*quo*) of action; second, as regards the effect, because every actuality is communicated to the effect by the agent and nothing can be unless it has *esse*, *esse* should be caused first so that something may be. *Esse* is the most universal, intimate, actual and formal effect and, for this reason, must derive from *Esse per essentiam*: "Every *ens per*

[106] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 359.

participationem, which is what every finite *ens* is outside of God, is caused by *Esse per essentiam*"[107]. Fabro then explores the nature of transcendental causality in creation and highlights three aspects: the absolute dependence of creation on the Creator; form and prime matter as objects of creation; *esse* as the proper effect and terminus of creation. Each is explained as follows.

1) *The absolute dependence of creation on the Creator*: Fabro limits himself to quoting one of St. Thomas's proofs that every *ens* is from God: What is found in something by participation, must be caused in it by to which it belongs essentially; now, God is *Ipsum Esse Per Se Subsistens* and such subsisting being must be one; therefore, all beings apart from God are not their own *esse*, but participate in *esse*. Hence, from the fact that a thing has being by participation, it follows that it is caused from another (that is *Esse per essentiam*)[108].

2) *The object of creation*: Here Fabro considers the production of form (especially that of spiritual beings) and the origin of prime matter. With regard to the production of form, a distinction should be made between those beings which have being from and within the cycle of nature and those beings which are *per se* subsistent forms. In the cycle of nature, every particular material form is caused (generated) from the form of the generator; in the second, the form is derived directly and uniquely from the First Cause by creation[109]. With regard to the production of prime matter, Fabro notes that as I, q. 44, a. 2 makes clear the problem was not raised in classical thought: The first philosophers explained everything in terms of local motion and assigned causes for accidental change[110]. With Plato and

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[107] C. FABRO, *PC*, 359. Here, Fabro recalls that the participation formula is the "definitive formula" of the principle of causality. He refers back to his 1936 article.

[108] See I, q. 44, a. 1 ad 1: "Ex hoc quod aliquid per participationem est ens, sequitur quod sit causatum ab alio".

[109] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 360-361: "Two planes of causality, predicamental and transcendental are clearly distinct, inasmuch as the first is proper to the created agent, which causes form from form, the second is reserved to God who is the unique principle-Creator from nothing".

[110] I, q. 44, a. 2: "Antiqui philosophi paulatim, et quasi pedetentim, intraverunt in cognitionem veritatis. A principio enim, quasi grossiores existentes, non existimabant esse entia nisi corpora sensibilia. Quorum qui ponebant in eis motum, non considerabant motum nisi secundum aliqua accidentia, ut puta secundum raritatem et densitatem, congregationem et segregationem. Et supponentes ipsam substantiam corporum increatam, assignabant aliquas causas

Aristotle an advance was made with the distinction between substantial form and matter, yet matter was held to be uncreated[111]. Plato and Aristotle, however, stop at the *fieri* of the form: "But we must take into consideration that matter is contracted by its form to a determinate species, as a substance, belonging to a certain species, is contracted by a supervening accident to a determinate mode of being; for instance, man by whiteness. Each of these opinions, therefore, considered *ens* under some particular aspect, either as *this ens* or as *such ens*. And so they assigned particular efficient causes to things"[112]. After Plato and Aristotle, some philosophers (*aliqui*)[113] come to the consideration of the total *fieri* of things and, therefore, to the production of the principles of substantial form and prime matter:

> Then others there were who arose to the consideration of *ens in quantum ens*, and who assigned a cause to things, not as these (*haec*), or as such (*talia*), but insofar as they are *entia*. Therefore whatever is the cause of things insofar as they are beings, must be the cause of things, not only according as they are such (*talia*) by accidental forms, nor according as they are these (*haec*) by substantial forms, but also according to all that belongs to their *esse* in any

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huiusmodi accidentalium transmutationum, ut puta amicitiam, litem, intellectum, aut aliquid huiusmodi".

[111] I, q. 44, a. 2: "Ulterius vero procedentes, distinxerunt per intellectum inter formam substantialem et materiam, quam ponebant increatam; et perceperunt transmutationem fieri in corporibus secundum formas essentiales. Quarum transmutationum quasdam causas universaliores ponebant, ut obliquum circulum, secundum Aristotelem, vel ideas, secundum Platonem".

[112] I, q. 44, a. 2: "Sed considerandum est quod materia per formam contrahitur ad determinatam speciem; sicut substantia alicuius speciei per accidens ei adveniens contrahitur ad determinatum modum essendi, ut homo contrahitur per album. Utrique igitur consideraverunt ens particulari quadam consideratione, vel inquantum est hoc ens, vel inquantum est tale ens. Et sic rebus causas agentes particulares assignaverunt".

[113] In a footnote, Fabro argues that in light of St. Thomas's later works, this *aliqui* should be understood as referring to Neoplatonic authors. That Aristotle stops at particular *fieri* is explicitly stated in the response to the first objection (I, q. 44, a. 2 ad 1): "Ad primum ergo dicendum quod Philosophus in I Physic. Loquitur de fieri particulari, quod est de forma in formam, sive accidentalem sive substantialem". Fabro repeats this conclusion in his 1974 article "Il nuovo problema dell'essere…", 481, specifying that *aliqui* refers to the Greek, Arabic and Latin Neoplatonists.

> way. And thus it is necessary to say that also prime matter is created by the universal cause of beings[114].

Fabro notes that in a more mature text, *De substantiis separatis*, St. Thomas's argument for the production of the "pure" forms and prime matter invokes the principle of participation, according to which God alone produces a thing in *esse*[115]. In this way the entire panorama of causality is outlined in two modes of causing: one which is derived, effected through motion and corresponds to particular causes; another which is original, effected without motion and reserved to God alone. Matter, as the receptive principle within the essence, and not merely the ultimate substrate of substantial changes, demands the causality of the First Principle in order to be[116].

3) *Esse as the proper terminus of creation*: St. Thomas often calls *esse* the "proper effect of God" since it is the most universal act and the most intense act. *Esse* is the act of every essence and form: just as the form is the act of matter and the production of the act is the terminus of every action of the agent, so is *esse* the supreme act and proper and direct effect of God, by

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[114] I, q. 44, a. 2: "Et ulterius aliqui erexerunt se ad considerandum ens inquantum est ens, et consideraverunt causam rerum, non solum secundum quod sunt haec vel talia, sed secundum quod sunt entia. Hoc igitur quod est causa rerum inquantum sunt entia, oportet esse causam rerum, non solum secundum quod sunt talia per formas accidentales, nec secundum quod sunt haec per formas substantiales, sed etiam secundum omne illud quod pertinet ad esse illorum quocumque modo. Et sic oportet ponere etiam materiam primam creatam ab universali causa entium".

[115] *De substantiis separatis*, ch. 10: "Quanto aliqua causa est superior, tanto est universalior, et virtus eius ad plura se extendit. Sed id quod primum invenitur in unoquoque ente, maxime commune est omnibus. Quaecumque enim superadduntur, contrahunt id quod prius inveniunt. Nam quod posterius in re intelligitur, comparatur ad prius ut actus ad potentiam. Per actum autem potentia determinatur. Sic igitur oportet ut id quod primum subsistit in unoquoque, sit effectus supremae virtutis: quanto autem aliquid est posterius, tanto reducatur ad inferioris causae virtutem. Oportet igitur quod id quod primum subsistit in unoquoque, sicut in corporibus materia et in immaterialibus substantiis quod proportionale est, sit proprius effectus primae virtutis universalis agentis. Impossibile est igitur quod ab aliquibus causis secundis aliqua producantur in esse non praesupposito aliquo effectu superioris agentis. Et sic nullum agens post primum totam rem in esse producit, quasi producens ens simpliciter per se, et non per accidens, quod est creare".

[116] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 363.

which every other act, both substantial and accidental, is in act[117]. *Esse*, in this case, means *actus essendi*, yet is considered in a very special way: as *esse commune*. As we saw earlier in Chapter One, St. Thomas holds that the *esse* of the creature may be considered in four ways[118]. The fourth consists in considering *esse* in a common way (*communiter*). As such, "*esse commune* indicates the first actuation, i.e., the placing in act, so to speak, of creatures in the sense that the act of *esse* is expanded in creatures and in essences which it actuates according to their respective natures and degrees of perfection"[119]. Participation in *esse* is the proper term of creation by virtue of which creatures are in act and brought forth from nothing. This is alluded to in the formula of *De Causis*, lect. 17: "*Esse est per creationem, aliae perfectiones superadditae per informationem*". For example, even though *vivere* is more perfect in the formal order than *esse*; in the concrete *ens*, *esse* is the act of the essence and all its accidents and perfections, thus, *esse* is the actuating and foundational act with respect to which any other aspect of *ens* is in potency and called "potency". When St. Thomas writes "*Deus est causa ipsius esse communis*"[120], this *esse commune* does not refer to "an abstract formality, nor to one, unique act of being which is common to all beings, but is the *actualitas essendi* which every being obtains by means of their own *esse* which is participated by God"[121].

Accordingly, *esse commune* relates to God in three ways: 1) All existing beings depend on *esse commune*, yet God does not. Moreover, *esse commune* depends on God. 2) All existing beings are "contained under" *esse commune*, yet God is not. Rather, *esse commune* is contained under his power. 3) All existing beings participate in that which is *esse*, God does not. Rather, created *esse* is a *quaedam* participation of God and a likeness to him[122].

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[117] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 363.

[118] *In I Sent.*, d. 36, q. 1, a. 3 ad 2: "Dicendum quod esse creaturae potest quadrupliciter considerari: primo modo, secundum quod est in propria natura; secundo modo, prout est in cognitione nostra; tertio modo, prout est in Deo; *quarto modo communiter, prout abstrahit ab omnibus his*".

[119] C. FABRO, *PC*, 364.

[120] *In V De Divinis Nominibus*, lect. 2, n. 658.

[121] C. FABRO, *PC*, 365.

[122] *In V De Divinis Nominibus*, lect. 2, n. 660: "Dicit quod ipsum esse commune est ex primo ente, quod est Deus, et ex hoc sequitur quod esse commune aliter se habeat ad Deum quam alia existentia, quantum ad tria: *primo* quidem, quantum ad hoc quod alia existentia dependent ab esse communi, non autem Deus, sed magis esse commune dependet a Deo; [...]. *Secundo*, quantum ad hoc quod

Fabro argues that St. Thomas interprets Neo-Platonic thought on *esse* in such a way that *esse* as conceived as a universal, metaphysical intermediary between God and the creature[123]. Calling *esse* an "intermediary" does not imply that it is a kind of subsistent Platonic Idea or subsistent reality: this is because participated, created *esse* is not subsistent by itself and only *Esse per essentiam* is subsistent *per se*: "All participations subsist in the synthesis of the participated act of *esse* with its own potency or subject which is the essence and form"[124]. Participated *esse* and the essence that receives it both proceed from God. God, however, "cannot supplant the function of the intrinsic formal cause, since he would then be identified with the ontological degree or essence of the creature: '*God makes* natural *esse in us* by creation; not by means of any agent cause, but, rather, by means of some formal cause: for the natural form is the principle of natural *esse*'"[125].

St. Thomas, then, has placed two "intermediaries" in the transcendental order, essence and *esse*, and two in the predicamental order, matter and form. These "mediate" divine, efficient causality on the two planes of being. In this way, St. Thomas redirects Aristotle's distinction between formal cause and efficient cause, by inserting divine causality into the immediate origin of essence and *esse* and in the initial origin of matter and form.

Fabro argues that up until the writing of the *Summa contra Gentiles* and *De Potentia*, *esse* is declared to be the *exclusive* effect of God as the proper terminus of creation[126]. However, as we have seen, the substantial

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omnia existentia continentur sub ipso esse communi, non autem Deus, sed magis esse commune continetur sub eius virtute, quia virtus divina plus extenditur quam ipsum esse creatum; [...]. *Tertio*, quantum ad hoc quod omnia alia existentia participant eo quod est esse, non autem Deus, sed magis ipsum esse creatum est quaedam participatio Dei et similitudo ipsius"

[123] *In XIII De Divinis Nominibus*, lect. 3, n. 989: "Unumquodque enim inquantum est finitum et terminatum, secundum hoc habet unitatem in actu. Sed unum quod est Deus est ante omnem finem et terminum et opposita eorum et est causa terminationis omnium et non solum existentium, sed etiam ipsius esse. Nam ipsum esse creatum non est finitum si comparetur ad creaturas, quia ad omnia se extendit; si tamen comparetur ad esse increatum, invenitur deficiens et ex praecogitatione divinae mentis, propriae rationis determinationem habens".

[124] C. FABRO, *PC*, 366.

[125] C. FABRO, *PC*, 367. Fabro quotes *De Veritate*, q. 27, a. 2 ad 3.

[126] *Summa contra Gentiles*, II, ch. 21: "Causa igitur propria essendi est agens primum et universale, quod Deus est. Alia vero agentia non sunt causa essendi

form confers the actuality of all the degrees of being to the composite, including its own determination. Therefore, even *esse* as the act of the concrete is not excluded from the range of predicamental, efficient causality. For example, in the more mature *Summa Theologiae* we find a text which shows the perfect parallelism between predicamental participation-causality and transcendental participation-causality[127]:

1) Predicamental causality of the form: "A perfect thing participating in some nature, makes a likeness (*simile*) to itself, not by absolutely producing that nature, but by applying it to something else. For this man cannot be the cause of human nature absolutely, because he would then be the cause of himself (*causa sui ipsius*); but he is the cause of human nature which is in this man that is generated; and thus he presupposes in his action a determinate matter whereby he is this man".
2) Predicamental causality of transcendental *esse*: "But as this man participates in human nature, so every created *ens* participates, so to speak, in the nature of being (*naturam essendi*); for God alone is his own *esse*, as we have said above. Therefore no created *ens* can produce a some *ens* absolutely, except forasmuch as it causes *esse* in "this": and so it is necessary to presuppose that whereby a thing is this, before the action whereby it makes its own likeness"[128].

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simpliciter, sed causa essendi hoc, ut hominem vel album. Esse autem simpliciter per creationem causatur, quae nihil praesupponit: quia non potest aliquid praeexistere quod sit extra ens simpliciter. Per alias factiones fit hoc ens vel tale: nam ex ente praeexistente fit hoc ens vel tale".

[127] In his footnote, Fabro writes that another excellent example of the parallelism between predicamental and transcendental participation and composition from the static or constitutive perspective of participation is found in *Quodlibet.* II, q. 2, a. 1.

[128] I, q. 45, a. 5 ad 1: "Aliquod perfectum participans aliquam naturam, facit sibi simile, non quidem producendo absolute illam naturam, sed applicando eam ad aliquid. Non enim hic homo potest esse causa naturae humanae absolute, quia sic esset causa sui ipsius, sed est causa quod natura humana sit in hoc homine generato. Et sic praesupponit in sua actione determinatam materiam per quam est hic homo. Sed sicut hic homo participat humanam naturam, ita quodcumque ens creatum participat, ut ita dixerim, naturam essendi, quia solus Deus est suum esse, ut supra dictum est. Nullum igitur ens creatum potest producere aliquod ens absolute, nisi inquantum esse causat in hoc, et sic oportet quod praeintelligatur id per quod aliquid est hoc, actioni qua facit sibi simile".

Over time, then, St. Thomas admits that there is an effective causality exercised by the *singular* (individual) agent on the concrete singular's (individual's) act of being.

This is confirmed by St. Thomas's thought on the conservation of things by God. Conservation does not imply a new action on behalf of God, but is rather the simple continuation of the creative act[129]. As we have seen, form exists by means of the participation of *esse*, participated *esse* exists and subsists insofar as it is received in the participating form or essence. Fabro sustains that in this Thomistic "dialectic" of being, one attributes to God the *total* causality of *esse* yet also confers the effective causality of all ontological degrees (including *esse*) to creatures or second causes[130]. This created mediation of being is founded on the immanence of form as the formal mediator of every act (both *actus essendi* and *operari*). Fabro summarizes this nuance in the static and dynamic orders of the formal causality of *esse* as follows:

> In the static order, then, the principle "*forma dat esse*" is valid in the strong sense, which St. Thomas clarifies in its most mature expression: "*Esse per se* results (*consequitur*) from the form of a creature, given the influx of God; just as light results (*sequitur*) from the *diaphanum* of the air, given the influx of the sun"[131]. Therefore between *esse*, the pure act *per essentiam*, which is God, and *esse* as the created act *per participationem*, which is proper to the creature, there is the mediation of the form or essential act[132].
>
> In the dynamic order, similarly if God is the First Cause not only of creation but also of conservation, secondarily, but in the proper sense, the created causes can also conserve *esse*: "It happens also that an effect depends on a creature as to its *esse*". The order of this causality is still according to the degree of universality of the same causes: "Therefore the first cause is the principal cause of the preservation of the effect which is to be referred to the middle causes in a secondary way; and all the more so, as the middle cause is higher and nearer to the first cause"[133].

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[129] See I, q. 104, a. 1 et ad 4.

[130] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 370.

[131] I, q. 104, a. 1 ad 1: "Esse per se consequitur formam creaturae, supposito tamen influxu Dei, sicut lumen sequitur diaphanum aeris, supposito influxu solis".

[132] C. FABRO, *PC*, 371.

[133] C. Fabro, *PC*, 371. See I, q. 104, a. 2: "Invenitur etiam quod ab aliqua creatura dependet aliquis effectus secundum suum esse. [...] Et ideo principaliter quidem prima causa est effectus conservativa; secundario vero omnes mediae causae, et tanto magis quanto causa fuerit altior et primae causae proximior".

Just as participation in the static-constitutive order involves a real distinction between essence and *esse* as potency and act, the same thing occurs in the dynamic order (of operation). The creature, as a being by participation, acts by means of the composition of substance and operative principles, and, then, thanks to the distinction between operative potency and the acts (operations) produced by this. In other words, the operation of the creature is really distinct from its substance[134], second, the operation of the creature is reality distinct from its act of being[135], and third, the operative potency of the creature is really distinct from its substance[136]. Far from fragmenting the real, the Thomistic conception "articulates the various planes of being passing from act into act and founding the second act on the first act and the extrinsic potency on the intrinsic potency"[137]. By means of the real distinction between essence and *esse*, one sees the intrinsic, mutual dependence between participated *esse* and the created essence; thanks to the distinction between the substantial form as first act and its operative potencies, one sees the intrinsic, mutual dependence between the operative potencies and the substantial form.

Fabro characterizes this progression from act to act as an ascending spiral of being: the operative potencies (accidental forms) derive from the substantial form, yet return to it with acts and habits which are, in turn, its perfections. The protagonists of this metaphysical drama "are the three acts: *esse*, substantial form and accidental form: Each is founded *by* the other and each is *for* the other, properly since one cannot be without the other, but rather precedes and founds it in a fundamental relationship: from the form comes *esse*, from the substantial form in act [comes] the accidental form"[138]. The point of departure in this reflection is in the distinction of the operative potencies from the substantial form: "The composite has substantial *esse*, through the substantial form and operates by the power which results from the substantial form. Hence an active accidental form is to the substantial form of the agent […] as the power of the soul is to the soul"[139]. The

[134] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 372.
[135] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 373.
[136] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 373.
[137] C. FABRO, *PC*, 374.
[138] C. FABRO, *PC*, 375.
[139] I, q. 77, a. 1 ad 3: "Compositum autem per formam substantialem habet esse substantialiter; per virtutem autem quae consequitur formam substantialem, operatur. Unde sic se habet forma accidentalis activa ad formam substantialem agentis [...], sicut se habet potentia animae ad animam".

accidental form is a principle of action due to the substantial form; therefore the substantial form is the first principle of action, but not the proximate principle[140]. In the transcendental order, the powers and accidents in general indicate the finite's imperfection; in the predicamental order, these express the perfection of its structure and condition its actuation. "As cause of the powers, the soul, the form, the essence remains the first primality [*primalità*] of being in the constitutive metaphysical order, even if in the dynamic, existential order, the powers and the acts which come from these are its acts and therefore, its perfections"[141]. In the ontological order of the structure of *ens*, therefore, the substantial from is the fundamental act; in the ontic order of properties and powers, (accidental forms) the *esse* of the accidental forms is caused by the subject[142]. Fabro holds that this is due to the dialectic of the emergence of act.

Fabro concludes this investigation into the relationship between predicamental and transcendental causality with a text that provides us with the ultimate metaphysical explanation of the principle *forma dat esse*:

> In this way, the principle *forma dat esse* has come to its ultimate metaphysical explanation; in the transcendental order it is God alone as "*Esse subsistens*" who gives *esse* and the creature is only receptive potency. But in the predicamental order it is the form as limiting principle of the transcendental act of *esse* that specifies it and pulls it into its orbit of contingency or necessity, death or immortality. Thus, if in the first (transcendental) instance God alone is the immediate principle of *esse*, in the second (predicamental) instance the creature as well is called to participate in the causality of *esse*, both in the sphere of formal causality as well as in efficient causality. This is what the "created mediation" in the causality of *esse* consists in; this is the original moment of Thomistic metaphysics: "God created all things immediately, but in the creation itself he established an order among things, so that some depend on others, by which they are *secondarily* preserved in being, though he remains the principal [cause] of their conservation"[143].

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[140] I, q. 77, a. 1 ad 4: "Forma accidentalis est actionis principium, habet a forma substantiali. Et ideo forma substantialis est primum actionis principium, sed non proximum".

[141] C. FABRO, *PC*, 377.

[142] C. FABRO, *PC*, 378.

[143] C. FABRO, *PC*, 393. See I. q. 104, a. 2 ad 1: "Deus immediate omnia creavit, sed in ipsa rerum creatione ordinem in rebus instituit, ut quaedam ab aliis dependerent, per quas secundario conservarentur in esse; praesupposita tamen principali conservatione, quae est ab ipso".

In predicamental causality, the direct terminus of causality is the form, while *esse* can be said to be "con-caused" in the causation of the form. *Esse commune*, as the act caused by God, is presupposed for the exercise of created, predicamental causality: "The form is the content, *esse* is the act. *Ens* is *ens* by *esse*, and *ens* causes *ens* insofar as it is *ens*; and thus a man who generates a man, like this dog who generates that dog, is an *ens* and can cause insofar as it already is, and can communicate the human nature to that man inasmuch as giving this nature, it is placed on the plane of *esse* and thus, causes insofar as it causes *esse*"[144].

* * *

The only explicit reference to the method of metaphysical reflection in this section is the allusion to the resolution of act found on pages 375-376. Fabro points out that this progression of act to act and consequent articulation of various planes of being (operative, essential, entitative) does not fragment the real nor develop into a theory of two incommunicable planes of causality. Rather, it is by means of such progression and distinctions that the unity of reality is preserved and seen and understood in terms of mutual dependence and participation. At the heart of this reflection we find *esse* and form which act as transcendental "mediators", and matter and form which act as predicamental "mediators". The section is largely dedicated to themes related to the formal causality of *esse*, i.e., the way in which form acts as a formal, constitutive principle of the essence and as the receptive-determining potency of participated *esse*. Fabro argues extensively that in the generation of another form, the predicamental agent acts as a total cause of the generated beings form and perfections (including *esse*), yet without denying the total causality of God as First Cause and Conservator of all beings. In this way, Fabro is setting the foundations for a response to the

[144] C. FABRO, *PC*, 394. Fabro continues: "We conclude then, by saying that the proper terminus of predicamental causality in the processes of generation and corruption is the form which is the first act of the corporeal essence; but we should add that the inadequate and connoted terminus, and still specifying as ultimate act of becoming itself, is *esse*. Every thing becomes in order to be able to be, and the new being of a thing presupposes that the cause which produced it was in *esse*: "Non esse non habet causam per se, quia nihil potest esse causa nisi inquantum est ens; ens autem, per se loquendo, est causa essendi' (I, q. 104, a. 3 ad 1). The *esse* of the things subject to generation and corruption enters into the order of predicamental reality as form and essence which bear it and of which it is act".

historically difficult question about divine motion in creatures and God's presence *per essentiam* in things. Still to be considered is Fabro's thought on the transcendental production of both form and *esse*. To this we now turn.

4.2 Divine causality and the derivation of created *ens*

In this section, we seek to understand Fabro's thought on metaphysical reflection with respect to the production of the two constitutive principles of created *ens*: essence and *esse*. Fabro's indications on the problem are scattered throughout several sections of *PC* and not gathered or presented in one place alone. Given this dispersion, we will concentrate only on those texts which come to bear on the production of *esse* and essence at the transcendental level and Fabro's thought on the nature of metaphysical *resolutio* at this stage. One of the questions that guides this investigation is the following: Does Fabro's proposal lead to an affirmation of two lines of transcendental participation (one between the created essence and the divine exemplars and one between the created *actus essendi* and divine *esse*) or to an affirmation of one principal line of participation (between the created *ens* and divine *esse*) and a formal, mediated derivation of the essence of the created *ens*? Recent works by Thomists argue both possibilities[145]. My own reading and analysis of Fabro's work favors the latter of the two readings.

The argument can be presented as follows. First, it is argued with Aquinas that the multiplicity of the created, determinate forms necessitates a multiplicity of divine exemplars as their cause (4.2.1). Second, the causal-participative relationship between God and the creature's essence and *actus essendi* needs to be explained (4.2.2). Third, the production of the created essence, which specifies the creature's *actus essendi*, is considered as a mediated derivation (4.2.3).

[145] Among those who interpret Fabro's metaphysics of creation as implying a "double creation" and "double participation" of essence and *esse*, we find J. AERTSEN, *Nature and Creature*, 185 and R. TE VELDE, *Participation and Substantiality*, 88-89, 146-147 and 218-225. Recently, G. Doolan has argued that Fabro's metaphysics holds that there is only one line of participation and that the causal relationship between the divine ideas and the created essence should not be called a "participation" (G. DOOLAN, *Aquinas on Divine Ideas as Exemplar Causes*, 191-244).

4.2.1 The multiplicity of divine ideas and exemplars

In a subsection entitled "Vertical Platonic Causality" (*PC*, 259-273)[146], Fabro speaks of the divine exemplars and characterizes each of the two fundamental moments in the "derivation" of creation as a "*Diremtion*". The first moment "is that of the *Diremtion* of the divine essence in the formal order insofar as the divine essence can involve the multiplicity of divine ideas as exemplars of things"[147]. The divine essence *per se* is the proper object of the divine act of understanding and, in this sense, there is only one divine idea. However, if we consider the diversity of creatures in relation to the divine essence, there is a plurality of ideas: "The divine essence becomes the principle of the infinite plurality of ideas inasmuch as the infinite perfection which this plurality expresses, whatever should be imitated '*ad extra*' cannot be expressed by one effect alone, but rather demands an unlimited multitude of real modes and forms"[148]. This is the foundation for the multiplicity of participations, which are the spiritual and corporeal essences[149]. 2) The second moment or "foundation" for the immediate derivation of the multiplicity of things from God, is God's absolute spirituality, which gives him an absolute freedom with respect to the infinite expansion of participations[150]. Fabro here is referring to the free,

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[146] In the French version, the section forms the latter part of a section entitled "The transposition of Platonic causality" (*Participation et causalité*, 426-451) in the Third Part of *PC* dedicated to the "Immanence of Causality".

[147] C. FABRO, *PC*, 259.

[148] C. FABRO, *PC*, 259.

[149] See *De Veritate*, q. 3, a. 2: "1) Deus per intellectum omnia operans, omnia ad similitudinem essentiae suae producit [...]. 2) Res autem creatae non perfecte imitantur divinam essentiam; unde essentia non accipitur absolute ab intellectu divino ut idea rerum, sed cum proportione creaturae fiendae ad ipsam divinam essentiam, secundum quod deficit ab ea, vel imitatur ipsam. 3) Diversae autem res diversimode ipsam imitantur; et unaquaeque secundum proprium modum suum, cum unicuique sit esse distinctum ab altera; et ideo *ipsa divina essentia, cointellectis diversis proportionibus rerum ad eam*, est idea uniuscuiusque rei. Unde, cum sint diversae rerum proportiones, necesse est plures esse ideas; et est quidem una omnium ex parte essentiae; sed pluralitas invenitur ex parte diversarum proportionum creaturarum ad ipsam". The italics and the numbering are Fabro's.

[150] See *In II Sent*., d. 18, q. 2, a. 2: "Sed in divinis actio sequitur intellectum; et ideo secundum quod diversa ab uno possunt intelligi, ita diversi effectus ab uno immediate procedere possunt; et secundum hoc multitudo a Deo processit, prout se intellexit ut ideam plurium, idest ut participabilem diversimoda imitatione".

creative act in which God creates (produces) his creatures according to the model of the divine exemplar ideas. Hence, the emphasis falls not on the essence, the potency-principle, but rather on the production of the act-principle, *actus essendi*.

In summary, Fabro's text on the production of the principles of finite *ens* refers to the divine exemplars as the "archetypes" of the substances and essences of spiritual and material beings. Secondly, the divine essence is said to be the *principle* of the infinite plurality of divine ideas. Thirdly, the foundation of the multiplicity and diversity of creatures is found in the fact that since there are different proportions to the divine essence in created things, there must necessarily be a plurality of divine exemplars. Fourthly, as an absolutely intelligent and spiritual being, God is absolutely free in his choice to create those beings he understands as participabilities of the perfection of his Divine Nature. Lastly, we see that in this text Fabro does not affirm a direct line of participation between the created essence and the divine exemplars. Further on, Fabro highlights the two roles of form and *esse* as constitutive principles of finite *ens* and how there is a line of participation between *esse* and the divine essence: "But in the transcendental order, the form is not *esse*, which is *actus essendi* and which proceeds by participation from God"[151]. Once again, no mention is made of a separate or distinct participation between the created essence and the divine ideas.

4.2.2 The "double participation" of essence and *esse*

More indications on the problem of the production of created *ens* are found in the two subsections on "The degrees of created causality" (*PC*, 379-385) and "Divine processions and causal participation" (*PC*, 385-395)[152]. Fabro reaffirms that *esse commune* is the proper terminus of God's creative act and the proper effect of God. *Esse commune*, as the participated *actus essendi* in existent individuals, is received into essences and thus multiplied. Fabro explains that what is *Esse per essentiam* in God is distinguished "in the creature in a "double participation" of essence and of *esse*: *essence* is conceived to come from God as from the ideal fullness of all perfections which is diversely participated in by the creature according to three fundamental formal degrees (*esse, vivere, intelligere*); participated *actus essendi* is the participation of God insofar as he is Pure Act"[153].

[151] C. FABRO, *PC*, 335.
[152] Both subsections correspond to *Participation et causalité*, 468-488.
[153] C. FABRO, *PC*, 379.

Fabro's reference to a "twofold participation" does not appear to imply that there are two different lines of participation, each of which directly extends from the creature to God. Fabro does not affirm that the created essence participates in God's ideas; rather, he merely states that the created essence comes from God and that God's perfection is participated in by the creatures. On the other hand, Fabro does speak about a participation in reference to creature's participated *actus essendi* and with respect to God's nature.

Fabro clarifies that the derivations of essence and *esse* should not be distinguished in God, but should be really distinguished ("*dirimere*") in the creature. He holds that the real distinction of essence and *esse* in the static transcendental order is reflected in the dynamic transcendental order in the "distinct creation" of essence and *esse*, and quotes St. Thomas's *De Potentia* to support this: "From the very fact that *esse* is ascribed to a quiddity, not only is the quiddity said to be but also to be created: since before it had being it was nothing, except perhaps in the intellect of the creator, where it is not a creature but the creating essence"[154]. Fabro's use of the phrase "distinct creation" is undoubtedly open to misinterpretation. In my opinion, it would have been better to use the term "concreation" in this context. Both J. Aertsen and R. te Velde[155] point out the complications inherent in Fabro's

[154] *De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 5 ad 2: "Ex hoc ipso quod quidditati esse attribuitur, non solum esse, sed ipsa quidditas creari dicitur: quia antequam esse habeat, nihil est, nisi forte in intellectu creantis, ubi non est creatura, sed creatrix essentia".

[155] See J. AERTSEN, *Nature and Creature*, 185 and R. TE VELDE, *Participation and Substantiality*, 88-89, 146-147, 218-225: "The consequence of Fabro's view is a fatal separation between the categorical causality of form and the transcendental causality with respect to being as such. If the many forms are somehow presupposed as the diversifying recipients of the flow of being, then it will be no long intelligible that the forms and essences of thing proceed from the same source as their very being. If the forms of things are thought to be prior to the common influx of being, then they must be reduced to God separately from the common effect of being. This 'double' creation is exactly what Fabro proposes: he argues that each creature in respect of its form and essence must have a '*dérivation propre*' in God. If the act of being is beyond the causal range of form and therefore the exclusive effect of creation, the formal limitation which the form imposes on being needs to be explained by a distinct derivation in God. Fabro's strong emphasis on the 'real' distinction as well as his view that form only compares to being as limiting potency ultimately leaves the unity of God's act of creation unexplained" (222). "Both Fabro and Gilson stress this negative character of form in relation to the act of being. Form, says Fabro, is the act of essence and as such

use of the term "double creation" and "distinct creation" in the French edition of *Partecipazione and Causalità*[156]. I note, however, that in the Italian version – which Fabro writes is more up-to-date than the French version[157] – the phrase "double creation" was replaced with "double participation", while the phrase "distinct creation" was left in the Italian version.

That Fabro refers to a type of "concreation" when he uses the term "distinct creation" can be gathered from the lines that follow in which he says that this distinction between essence and *esse* in the transcendental order has its reflection in the predicamental order. Form, in its origin, is *concreated* with matter, while in the natural process of *fieri*, it is educed from the potentiality of matter[158]. Fabro then refers to the role of the divine exemplars as *causal* principles in the *initial* foundation of the essences, noting that St. Thomas places the origin of all forms in God and that the divine exemplars as causal principles are used to explain the causal terminus of the divine action in the initial foundation of the essences[159].

Later on, Fabro picks up the thread of this reflection on essence and *esse* when he specifies that the fundamental character of causality is not simply "having *esse* from another", which only implies a procession from a

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something positive; however, this positivity must be thought of as a 'positivity of nothingness', since the full positive act of *esse* is limited, and thus negated, by the proper determination of form / essence in which the *esse* is received. Fabro's view of the relationship between form as the act of essence and as the receiving principle of *esse* remains unclear and confusing" (224-225).

[156] C. FABRO, *Participation et Causalité,* 468: "C'est dire que ce qui est l'*esse per essentiam* en Dieu, acte pur et totalite de la perfection, s'epanche dans la creature par une double creation: de l'essence et de l'*esse*".

[157] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 10.

[158] See *De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 4 ad 7: "Forma potest considerari dupliciter: uno modo secundum quod est in potentia; et sic a Deo materia concreatur, nulla disponentis naturae actione interveniente. Alio modo secundum quod est in actu; et sic non creatur, sed de potentia materiae educitur per agens naturale".

[159] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 380-381. Fabro's phrases "the origin of the form" and "initial foundation of the essences" refer to three things: the creation of the angelic essences, the creation of the human soul and the production of the various species of material beings. The coming-to-be of forms in the natural processes of generation and corruption in material beings occurs by *information* and not creation.

principle[160], but rather that of absolute or total dependence. In creation, this total dependence involves an "ontological fall" and therefore an "ontological difference" of the effect from its cause: God is the cause as *Esse per essentiam*, while the creature is *ens per participationem*. This is the first *Diremtion* (distinction) of being, and, consequently, of all the perfections and formalities connected to being, such as the transcendentals and the pure perfections. The originary *Diremtion* of being as well as the source of the multiplicity and diversity of beings are found in the "ontological fall" in which causality is actuated[161]. Therefore, calling the creature an *ens per participationem* does not simply mean that it "depends on" something else, but that it involves "being *diverse* from" the cause and is another reality. As St. Thomas writes: "Creatures, however, are not perfect representations of their exemplar: wherefore they can imitate it in various ways so that there can be many exemplates"[162]. The fundamental, structural *Diremtion* in created beings – the composition of essence and *esse*, which is the means by which *ens per participationem* is constituted, divided and distinct from *Esse per essentiam* – is conducted to the metaphysical "structure" of God. In this, Fabro once again deals with the production of both created principles:

> The *resolutio* of the first real, composition of the creature, and the first foundation, then, of the first "*Diremtion*", is made in the first notional duality that our intellect makes of the divine fullness insofar as in it we consider the *content* of the essence, which is the simple totality of all perfections, and its form or act which is most actual *esse*: "For in God one should consider his nature and his *esse*; and as his nature is the cause and exemplar of all natures, so also his *esse* is the cause and exemplar of all *esse*. Hence knowing his

[160] Fabro uses the example of the processions in the Trinity and quotes *De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 13 ad 4: "Illud quod habet esse ab alio, in se consideratum, est non ens, si ipsum sit aliud quam ipsum esse quod ab alio accipit; si autem sit ipsum esse quod ab alio accipit, sic non potest in se consideratum, esse non ens; non enim potest in esse considerari non ens, licet in eo quod est aliud quam esse, considerari possit. Quod enim est, potest aliquid habere permixtum; non autem ipsum esse, ut boetius dicit in libro de hebdomadibus. Prima quidem conditio est creaturae, sed secunda est conditio filii Dei".

[161] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 385.

[162] *De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 16 ad 12: "Creaturae vero non perfecte imitantur suum exemplar. Unde diversimode possunt ipsu m imitari, et sic esse diversa exemplata.".

> essence, he knows all things; so also knowing his *esse* he knows the *esse* of each thing"[163].

The problem of the production of the creature's essence and *esse*, Fabro notes, is considered at the supreme summit of metaphysical resolution, since "the production of the creature is referred for its effective realization to an absolutely free decree of the divine will within which the very creature is present in the knowledge of God"[164].

Further on, in Section Two of Part Three of *PC* deals with "the problematic of participation"; the first subsection is entitled: "The semantics of *esse*: from formal *esse* to actual *esse*" (*PC* 527-539) and hints the twofold production of essence and *actus essendi* and how reflection on the essence leads to *esse* as the source of all formal perfection in a finite *ens* and how reflection on *actus essendi* deals with real participation of being in *esse* as act of all acts.

> Therefore, within this intensive *esse* – which is the proper object of creation – occurs the *Diremtion* of the real, i.e., that which we have called the double foundation (or twofold moment) of *ens* in *esse*: as essence (the formal participation in *esse*, as fontal fullness of all perfections) and as *actus essendi* (real participation of beings in *esse*, as act of all acts). Therefore, just as no material or spiritual creature is, unless it is a participation of the perfection of being, it can exist only insofar as it forms a composition with participated *actus essendi*[165].

Philosophical reflection arises and is sustained by means of the concept of being. Thus, "it should proceed to the 'foundation' (*Grund*) of the truth of being"[166]. Arriving to the ultimate foundation of every being, should bring

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[163] C. FABRO, *PC*, 388. See *In I Sent*., d. 38, q. 1, a. 3: "Etiam in ipso Deo est considerare naturam ipsius, et esse eius; et sicut natura sua est causa et exemplar omnis naturae, ita etiam esse suum est causa et exemplar omnis esse. Unde sicut cognocendo essentiam suam, cognoscit omnem rem; ita cognoscendo esse suum cognoscit esse cuiuslibet rei'".

[164] C. FABRO, *PC*, 89. See *In I Sent*., d. 8, q. 1, a. 3: "Bonum habet rationem causae finalis, esse autem rationem causae exemplaris et effectivae tantum in Deo"

[165] C. FABRO, *PC*, 529.

[166] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 531. In his footnote, Fabro explains his conception of *Grund* should be taken to mean "foundation as act and not as mere reason and much less as sufficient reason".

one "beyond" (*oltre*) *ens*, but not "beyond" (*al di là*) *esse*; otherwise, this foundation would be identified with nothing[167].

* * *

To summarize: Fabro speaks of the summit of metaphysical *resolutio* in the context of establishing a transcendental foundation for the real distinction between essence and *esse*. Fabro connects the production of the creature's essence to God as the ideal fullness of all perfection, to the divine exemplars and to God's knowledge of his Nature; he connects the production of the created *actus essendi* to God as Pure Act and to God's knowledge of his *Esse*. God's Nature and *Esse* are the cause and exemplar of all created essences and created *esse*. The creature is effectively realized by a totally free "decree" of God's will, yet present from all eternity in God's knowledge. The phrase "double creation" used in the French version of *PC* to refer to the production of created essence and created *esse* was replaced, in the Italian version, with the phrase "double participation". An attentive reading of Fabro's texts shows that he does not argue for two lines of transcendental participation, each of which connects the creature and Creator in a "direct" fashion. He argues, rather, that there are two participations: 1) a "direct" line of transcendental (causal) participation between created *actus essendi* and Divine *Esse* and 2) a "mediated" line of participation of the created essence which "measures" *actus essendi* according to a "measure" established by its corresponding divine exemplar[168]. In the latter we are dealing with the constitutive participation of a created *ens* in its *actus essendi* and the predicamental participations (causal and structural) of the essence. In the end, I am of the opinion that it would be better to speak about a "concreation" of essence and *esse* in the production of a created *ens*, rather than "distinct creation" of two principles that form one *ens*.

4.2.3 "Mediated" derivation of the created essence

The Conclusion to Fabro's *opus magnum* brings together his reflections on the composition of *ens*, causality and analogy and tries to

[167] C. FABRO, *PC*, 531.

[168] For an analysis, summary and defense of Fabro's work in light of R. te Velde's objection to "double creation" see G. DOOLAN, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas as Exemplary Causes*, 237-243.

shed light on the correspondence between participation and causality and the use of analogy in metaphysical resolution. In the text, Fabro begins by asking whether, in Thomistic metaphysics, primacy should be given to the notion of *esse* or to the notion of participation. He answers that the metaphysics of participation, in all its static and dynamic aspects, has its foundation in the notion of intensive *esse*; yet "this same *esse* is articulated as emergent act, in the various phases of this metaphysics, thanks to the intensity and heuristic richness of the notion of participation"[169]. With this premise, Fabro then precedes to the correspondence between the static-constitutive order of *ens* and the dynamic-productive order of causality.

1) *The static order of the constitution of ens*. Fabro shows that static, predicamental participation points towards transcendental participation – almost as if to its metaphysical foundation. The predicamental participation of matter-form and of substance-accidents *presupposes* the transcendental composition of essence and *esse*[170]. Due to the transcendental composition of essence and *actus essendi* in finite *ens*, there is an ontological difference between *esse* and *ens* and a metaphysical difference between the creature and the Creator. Essence is understood as the determination of being and remains within the predicamental order according to genus and species. *Ens*, insofar as it implies a reference to intensive, emergent *esse* is placed in the transcendental order. While it is true that *actus essendi*, insofar as it is the act of an essence, is finite, theoretical resolution brings the metaphysician to the determination of the composition of finite *ens* and to *esse ipsum* as act *par excellence*, as One, Simple, Infinite. With respect to this act, the composition of essence and *esse* constitutes the originary *Diremtion*. "In transcendental participation as composition, the totality which founds the 'Diremtion' of the participation is the fullness of perfection of *esse* as intensive act with respect to which all other finite beings and all other perfections – generic, specific and individual – are presented as participations"[171]. Fabro concludes that: "The notional correspondence between the various moments of the structure of the finite (participation, composition, real dependence, analogy…) are always articulated and sustained upon *esse* as intensive emergent act"[172].

2) *The dynamic order of the production of ens.* There is a parallel between transcendental causality and predicamental causality. Each has

[169] C. FABRO, *PC*, 639.
[170] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 642.
[171] C. FABRO, *PC*, 640.
[172] C. FABRO, *PC*, 642.

their proper object and characteristic mediation. In transcendental causality, God bestows both essence and *esse*[173]. Although both come from nothing (*ex nihilo*) through the same divine creative act, the point of view of the transcendental foundation reveals a difference: "From the very fact that *esse* is attributed to a quiddity, not only *esse*, but the quiddity itself is said to be created, for before having *esse*, [the quiddity] is nothing except perhaps in the mind of the creator, where it is not a creature but the creative essence (*creatrix essentia*)"[174]. The texts that follow this quote are among the most important texts Fabro has written on the problem. First, he considers the derivation of the created essence:

> In Thomism, the situation cannot admit of dispute: the created essences are derived from the divine essence, through the intermediary of the divine Ideas, and therefore formally the derivation is according to the relation of exemplarity. Every essence, then, although it is act in the formal order, is created as potency that is actuated by participated *esse* which *in se* it receives: its actuality is "mediated", therefore, by *esse*[175].

In contrast to the "mediated" derivation of the essence according to a relation of exemplarity, Fabro speaks of the derivation of *esse* using the terms "direct causality", "direct derivation", "participation":

> *Esse* is the act that constitutes the proper terminus of transcendental causality (creation, conservation...) and it is in virtue of the direct causality of *esse* that God operates immediately in every agent. Hence, the derivation of participated *esse* from *esse per essentiam* is direct, along strictly metaphysical lines, as the founded act from Founding Act: in fact, participated *actus essendi*, precisely insofar as it is participated, is intrinsically dependent on God; but remains always act and in act in the entire metaphysical line, once created and up to when it will not be annihilated[176].

Once again, I would argue that these texts confirm our reading of Fabro's texts and his proposal of a direct line of causal participation between created

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[173] See *De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 1 ad 17: "Deus simul dans esse, producit id quod esse recipit: et sic non oportet quod agat ex aliquot praeexistenti".

[174] *De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 5 ad 2: "Quod ex hoc ipso quod quidditati esse attribuitur, non solum esse, sed ipsa quidditas creari dicitur: quia antequam esse habeat, nihil est, nisi forte in intellectu creantis, ubi non est creatura, sed creatrix essentia".

[175] C. FABRO, *PC*, 643.

[176] C. FABRO, *PC*, 643.

esse and the divine essence and a "mediated" line of causality according to a relation of exemplarity and according to the divine ideas for the production of the created essence. The participation proper to the created essence is that of its participation in *actus essendi*.

* * *

In conclusion, Fabro's metaphysical *resolutio* culminates in the problems of transcendental causality (creation, conservation and divine motion) and the determination of the relationship between the formal, predicamental causality of *esse* and action and divine, transcendental causality. The resolution of all acts and perfections to *esse* is the first step in establishing the direct line of causal participation between created *esse*, as proper *terminus* of creation, and the divine nature or Divine *Esse*. The connection between the created essence and the divine exemplars is not spoken about by Fabro in terms of a direct participation, but rather in terms of "formal derivation" and "mediated derivation and actuality". For Fabro, the created essence, as created potency, is limited *in itself* and not by itself. Because of this, there is no need to propose an additional line of participation to account for its limitation. The created essence corresponds to its divine exemplar and thus there is an extrinsic, formal causality exercised by the divine exemplar which determines the essence. All actuality and perfection, however, comes to the essence through the act of being. The essence, in turn, determines *esse* by limiting it and specifies it to a particular degree of perfection[177].

5. Metaphysical reflection and analogy (*PC*, 498-525)

As indicated earlier, Fabro considers the analogy of being as the "conclusive moment" of metaphysics and as the "semantics of participation"[178]. Participation, in turn, is the metaphysical foundation of

[177] In Chapter Six of this dissertation, I will look more in-depth at Fabro's proposal regarding transcendental causality and creation, taking into consideration the critiques of Fabro's proposal and additions made to it by other Thomists.

[178] Fabro's theory of analogy has been dealt with several times by other Thomists: B. MONTAGNES, *La Doctrine de l'analogie de l'être d'après saint Thomas d'Aquin*, Nauwelaerts, Louvain-Paris, 1963[1] (Reprinted: Les editions du cerf, Paris 2008[2]; English trans. *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being accoring to Thomas Aquinas*, Marquette University Press, Milwaukee 2004; J. A. SAYES,

analogy. Throughout his presentation of the analogy of being, Fabro speaks of the role of analogy in metaphysical reflection as a "*reductio ad unum*". Based on his interpretation of Thomistic participation and being, Fabro gives a certain primacy to the "analogy of attribution" as it is the foundation of the "analogy of proportionality".

Fabro's main text on analogy is divided into three subsections: 1) *Reductio ad unum* and the analogy of attribution (*PC*, 498-504); 2) Analogy of attribution and analogy of proportionality (*PC*, 504-516); 3) Semantics of metaphysical analogy: likeness and analogy (*PC*, 516-525)[179]. In his presentation of analogy, Fabro moves from the relationship between participation and "metaphysical analogy" to the establishment of "analogy of attribution" as the foundation of "analogy of proportionality". The third subsection presents thirteen points about the analogical predication of perfections to God and creatures. These three subsections are complemented by two other texts on analogy: the first considers analogy from two points of view: from a static-formal point of view and from a dynamic-causal point of view (*PC*, 590-600); the second is found in the Conclusion to *PC* and provides us with a summary of Fabro's thought on the analogy of being (see *PC*, 646-651). One important point is that Fabro states clearly that, in his exposition, he does not intend to undertake an analytical exposition of St.

Existencia de Dios y conocimiento humano, Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca, Salamanca 1980, 100-104; M. PANGALLO, *Il principio di causalità nella metafisica di S. Tommaso. Saggio di ontologia tomista alla luce dell'interpretazione di Cornelio Fabro,* Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Roma 1991, 154-183 (chapter 5 on "Analogia e principio di causalità"); M. PANGALLO, "Il 'primato' dell'analogia di attribuzione nella metafisica di Cornelio Fabro, interprete di San Tommaso", in *Veritatem in caritate*, G. M. PIZZUTI (ed.), Ermes, Potenza 1991, 165-175; T. TYN, *Metafisica della sostanza. Partecipazione e analogia entis*, ESD, Bologna 1991, 824-838; V. CRUZ AMORÓS, *El fundamento metafísico de la relación entre las analogías de atribución y de proporcionalidad. La interpretación de Cornelio Fabro de la doctrina de Santo Tomás*, Pontifica Universitas Sanctae Crucis, *Thesis ad Doctoratum in Philosophia*, Roma 1999. Pangallo notes that placing analogy at the conclusion of metaphysical discourse is unconventional. Traditionally one *begins* by explaining analogy as the "technique" of metaphysical language and by affirming that "*ens*" is an analogous concept in order to guarantee the unity of metaphysics as a science (See M. PANGALLO, *Il principio di causalità…*, 181).

[179] These three subsections in the Italian version form one section entitled, "Participation, causalité, analogie" in the French version (509-537).

Thomas's doctrine of analogy, but rather only indicate the principles of such a doctrine[180].

Fabro's exposition of analogy is somewhat repetitive as he considers the same argument from different angles. In the exposition that follows I summarize the content of Fabro's theory in the following points: the role of analogy in the metaphysical *reductio ad unum* (5.1); the distinction between analogy of attribution and analogy of proportionality (5.2); the semantics of metaphysical analogy (5.3); the metaphysical foundation of analogy (5.4).

5.1 The role of analogy in the metaphysical *reductio ad unum*

For Fabro, the analogical predication of being is able to maintain the differences proper to the multiplicity of beings and, at the same time, accomplish a *semantic* reduction to unity in the term "*ens*"[181]. Fabro leaves no doubt as to the importance of the analogical "*reductio ad unum*" in the method of metaphysics. Referring to the importance of Thomistic *esse* as the terminus of resolution and foundation, Fabro writes: "This is the *reductio* (or *resolutio*) *ad unum* that constitutes, fundamentally, the proper method of metaphysics, both in its expositive analysis (the forms and modes of predicamental being) and in its conclusive synthesis (*ens per participationem* and *esse per essentiam*)"[182]. The *reductio ad unum*, Fabro argues, refers to both the predicamental order of substance and accidents and the transcendental order of creation and God. In both orders we are dealing with a true analogy[183].

In the second order, with respect to our rational knowledge of God, the Dionysian *triplex via* (way of causality-affirmation, way of negation-remotion, way of eminence) is of utmost importance since predication by eminence indicates that the pure perfections and the transcendental perfections pertain to God *per essentiam* and to the creature *per participationem*. In the predication of *esse* and of the pure perfections of God and creatures, it is necessary to make a distinction between the thing or perfection signified (*res significata*) and the way of signifying (*modus significandi*). Even though we can grasp the perfection as such, we can never, in this life, directly understand the way it pertains to God. The mode that *esse* and perfections have in creatures is *per participationem*, and this is

[180] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 499.
[181] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 484.
[182] C. FABRO, *PC*, 498.
[183] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 499.

accessible to our finite intellect; the mode that they have in God is *per essentiam*: "according to the infinite distance of the 'ontological difference' that constitutes divine transcendence"[184]. In light of this, the fundamental rule of metaphysical semantics is the following: the way in which such perfections are "possessed" is the way in which they are predicated. In Thomism, then, we have two planes of analogy:

[1] Predicamental plane (*analogy of substance and accidents*). To the substance pertains or belongs the qualification of principal *ens*, to the accident, that of secondary or derived *ens*. on the strictly metaphysical plane, this implies that only the substance has *esse* as *actus essendi*, while only *esse essentiae* belongs to the accident, and this is still derived from the substance to which it is related. Therefore, here, the primary and founding characteristic of the *respectus ad unum* is evident.

[2] Transcendental plane (*analogy of God and the creature*). God is *Esse per essentiam* or *esse subsistens*, *esse ipsum*: the creature is *ens per participationem* or it "has" *esse per participationem.* In the Thomistic conception *esse per essentiam* demands the absolute fullness of perfection in absolute simplicity (emergence of intensive *esse*); in the creature having *esse per participationem* implies the division and the real composition, namely, the division in the multiplicity of the created essences of the fullness of perfection of divine *esse* and the composition in every creature of their essence or perfection with the proper act of being (*esse*) according to the metaphysical demand of the "*Diremtion*" of being[185].

Due to the composition of essence and *esse*, *ens per participationem* presents the paradoxical situation of being infinitely distant from *Esse per essentiam*, and yet, at the same time, of belonging to and absolutely depending upon the Creator. There is an immediateness and totality in divine causality which founds the immediacy and totality of God's presence in things: the immanence of *esse* – as the participated *actus essendi* in the creature – involves an "immanence" of God (*per potentiam*, *per essentiam*, *per praesentiam*) in the creature.

Since divine causality – which produces, measures, orders and governs the creature – does not have a merely extrinsic character, its relation to the constitution of created being is not reduced to an imitation of the

[184] C. FABRO, *PC*, 500.
[185] C. FABRO, *PC*, 500-501.

infinite essence by the finite essences[186]. Rather, "*esse* and the pure perfections are attributed to and predicated of God and creatures according to an analogy of *intrinsic attribution*"[187]. Fabro explains this analogy of intrinsic attribution in terms of participation in contrast to the analogy proposed by Henry of Ghent and Suarez (relation of causal dependence):

> Above all, it is analogy of *attribution*, since the first relation of *ens per participationem* with respect to *esse per essentiam*, is of total dependence and therefore of total reference under every aspect of reality. And, more precisely, it is analogy of *intrinsic* attribution, and not purely extrinsic, and this from two perspectives: on behalf of the creature, insofar as this "has *in se*" its own participated *esse*, on behalf of God, insofar as the first and total cause of *esse* is immanent ("present") in every *esse* and sustains, by that presence, the reality of every *ens* and all of its perfection[188].

Despite the variety of terminology employed by St. Thomas throughout his writings, Fabro argues that St. Thomas maintains a structure of analogy that is "coherent with the fundamental principles of metaphysical analysis. From the first steps of his work he embarks resolutely along the way of participation, to which he remains faithful throughout its entire development"[189].

Fabro begins his textual analysis of Thomistic analogy with an early text from St. Thomas's *Commentary on the Sentences*, showing that the *reductio ad unum* characteristic of metaphysics is effected by means of analogy and is based on the creature's (*ens per participationem*) reception of *esse* from God, who is *Primum Ens*:

> The Creator and the creature reduce to one, not by community of univocity, but by community of analogy. Now, this community can be twofold: either because some things participated in another one thing according to a *prius et posterius*, like potency and act in the notion of *ens*, and similarly substance and accidents; or because one receives *esse* and [its] *ratio* from the other, and this is the analogy of the creature to the Creator: in effect, the creature does not have *esse* unless it descends from the First *Ens*: hence it is not called "*ens*"

[186] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 501.
[187] C. FABRO, *PC*, 502.
[188] C. FABRO, *PC*, 502.
[189] C. FABRO, *PC*, 502.

> unless insofar as it imitates the First *Ens*; and the same happens with wisdom and the other things that are said of creatures[190].

In the metaphysical *reductio ad unum* effected by means of analogy, the creature is called "*ens*" to the degree that it has *esse* and imitates the Creator (*Primum Ens*). In light of this, Fabro laments the fact that those who have studied Thomistic analogy up to now seem to have concentrated almost exclusively on the logical-semantic aspect of the problem rather than on its metaphysical foundation. Fabro holds that this is the reason why there is a disagreement among Thomists over both the division of analogy and which analogy holds primacy.

With this premise, Fabro addresses the problem of the interpretation of St. Thomas's texts on analogy and argues that, from a *metaphysical* perspective, we can begin by eliminating the threefold division of analogy found in *In I Sent*., d. 19, q. 5, a. 2 ad 1. Analogy *secundum esse et non secundum intentionem*, he argues, refers to an obsolete distinction between terrestrial and heavenly bodies; analogy *secundum intentionem et non secundum esse* refers to "extrinsic attribution"; analogy *secundum intentionem et secundum esse* is properly metaphysical and deals with "intrinsic attribution"[191]. The attribution is intrinsic since the reference is taken according to the degree of perfection. Secondly, Fabro argues that further on in St. Thomas's *Commentary on the Sentences* (*In III Sent*., d. 2, q. 1, a. 1, sol. 1 ad 3), we find a more "definitive formula" of analogy from the metaphysical point of view. This text shows that there are two ways the creature is like God: one according to participation, the other according to proportionality:

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[190] *In I Sent*., Prooemium, q. 1, a. 2 ad 2: "Creator et creatura reducuntur in unum, non communitate univocationis sed analogiae. Talis autem communitas potest esse dupliciter. Aut ex eo quod aliqua participant aliquid unum secundum prius et posterius, sicut potentia et actus rationem entis, et similiter substantia et accidens; aut ex eo quod unum esse et rationem ab altero recipit, et talis est analogia creaturae ad creatorem: creatura enim non habet esse nisi secundum quod a primo ente descendit: unde nec nominatur ens nisi inquantum ens primum imitatur; et similiter est de sapientia et de omnibus aliis quae de creatura dicuntur".

[191] *In I Sent*., d. 19, q. 5, a. 2 ad 1: "Vel secundum intentionem et secundum esse; et hoc est quando neque parificatur in intentione communi, neque in esse; sicut ens dicitur de substantia et accidente; et de talibus oportet quod natura communis habeat aliquod esse in unoquoque eorum de quibus dicitur, sed differens secundum rationem majoris vel minoris perfectionis".

> The likeness of the creature to God is twofold. One according to the participation of something in the divine goodness, like as from him everything living participates in life. And thus the rational creature in which is found *esse*, *vivere* and *intelligere* is maximumly likened to God. Another likeness is according to proportionality, and thus there is said to be a likeness between God and fire, for as fire consumes a body, so God consumes iniquity"[192].

In light of these texts, Fabro concludes that, from a metaphysical perspective, there are two types of analogy between the creature and God: one analogy that is *secundum intentionem et esse* and is consequent to the creature's participation in *esse* (analogy of intrinsic attribution); another analogy that establishes a likeness according to proportionality (analogy of proper proportionality). Fabro argues that some contemporary Thomists (like Manser, Gredt, Garrigou-Lagrange, Penido…) have fallen into the error of giving priority to analogy of proportionality over analogy of attribution since they follow the "formalistic turn" of dividing *esse* into *esse existentiae* and *esse essentiae* and do not see how St. Thomas's doctrine of analogy rests on the Thomistic synthesis of intensive *esse*, the Aristotelian principle of the emergence of act and the Platonic principle of participation.

5.2 Analogy of proportionality and analogy of attribution

Fabro begins his exposition of the two types of analogy of being he has just established – the analogy of proportionality and the analogy of attribution – by examining two "principles" involved in analogy: the "principle of proportion" and the "principle of similitude". Characteristic of one type of proportion is the "relation of order" and "causal dependence"[193].

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[192] *In III Sent*., d. 2, q. 1, a. 1, sol. 1 ad 3: "Duplex est similitudo creaturae ad Deum. Una secundum participationem alicuius divinae bonitatis sicut ab eo vivente omnia vitam participant: et sic creatura rationalis in qua invenitur esse, vivere et intelligere, maxime Deo assimilatur; et haec similitudo requiritur ad assumptibilitatem. Alia similitudo est secundum proportionem, ut si dicatur similitudo inter Deum et ignem, quia sicut ignis consumit corpus, ita Deus consumit nequitiam". See also, *De veritate*, q. 2, a. 11 ad 1 and *In II Sent*., d. 16, q. 1, a. 2 ad 5.

[193] *In III Sent*., d. 1, q. 1, a. 1 ad 3: "Sicut dicimus esse proportionem inter materiam et formam, quia se habet in ordine, ut perficiatur materia per formam, et hoc secundum proportionabilitatem quamdam: quia sicut forma potest dare esse, ita et materia potest recipere idem esse: et hoc modo etiam movens et motum debent esse proportionabilia, et agens et patiens, ut scilicet sicut agens potest imprimere

This characteristic of proportion shows how "the proportionality in the Thomistic conception [of analogy] originates from and is founded on proportion or on intrinsic attribution according to causal dependence"[194]. "Similitude", on the other hand, is had in one of two ways. As St. Thomas writes:

> For it belongs to things to be said similar in two ways: a) Either from the fact that they participate in one form, as two white things in whiteness, and thus in every similarity, it is necessary to be composed from that in which it convenes with something similar, and from that in which they differ from this, as similitude is not unless there is a difference, according to Boethius. Hence to God nothing can be similar or convenient or conformed, as found frequently in the sayings of the philosophers [this is *predicamental participation*]. b) Or from the fact that one which participatively has the form imitates that which essentially has it. As if the white body is said to be similar to separated whiteness or the fiery mixed body to fire itself. And such similiarity which places composition in one and simplicity in the other can be of the creature to God, which are participants in goodness, wisdom and so on, which in God is his essence [this is *transcendental participation*][195].

Creatures are said to be similar to God and imitate God due to their participation in *esse*. Thus, while predicamental "likeness" constitutes univocal predication; transcendental "likeness" is explained by means of analogy and implies the absolute transcendence of God:

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aliquem effectum, ita patiens possit recipere eumdem […]. Et ideo non est inconveniens ut hic modus proportionis inter Deum et creaturam salvetur, quamvis in infinitum distent: et ideo possibilis est unio utriusque".

[194] C. FABRO, *PC*, 504.

[195] C. FABRO, *PC*, 504-505. *In I Sent*., d. 48, q. 1, a. 1: "Conformitas est convenientia in forma una, [...]. Unde hoc modo aliquid Deo conformatur quod sibi assimilatur. Contingit autem aliqua dici similia dupliciter. Vel ex eo quod participant unam formam, sicut duo albi albedinem; et sic omne simile oportet esse compositum ex eo in quo convenit cum alio simili, et ex eo in quo differt ab ipso, cum similitudo non sit nisi differentium, secundum Boetium. Unde sic Deo nihil potest esse simile nec conveniens nec conforme, ut frequenter a philosophis dictum invenitur. Vel ex eo quod unum quod participative habet formam, imitatur illud quod essentialiter habet. Sicut si corpus album diceretur simile albedini separatae, vel corpus mixtum igneitate ipsi igni. Et talis similitudo quae ponit compositionem in uno et simplicitatem in alio, potest esse creaturae ad Deum participantis bonitatem vel sapientiam vel aliquid hujusmodi, quorum unumquodque in Deo est essentia".

> The likeness of the creature to God falls short of univocal likeness in two respects. First it does not arise from the participation of one form, as two hot things are like by participation of one heat: because what is affirmed of God and creatures is predicated of him essentially, but of creatures, by participation: so that a creature's likeness to God is as that of a hot thing to heat, not of a hot thing to one that is hotter. Secondly, because this very form of which the creature participates falls short of the nature of the thing which is God, just as the heat of fire falls short of the nature of the sun's power whereby it produces heat[196].

Likeness (similarity) is linked to causality and is founded on it. In St. Thomas's metaphysics of "similitude", there are two distinct types of "likeness" between the creature and God. We touched on this earlier when we considered transcendental causality and the production of essence and *esse* by God. The first type of likeness between creature and Creator implies a *vertical* derivation according to the principle of divine exemplarism, thanks to which every real created formality is related to its respective divine Idea, from which it differs regarding its mode of being:

> One is the likeness of the creature to the divine intellect, and thus the form understood by God and the thing itself are homogeneous, although they have not the same mode of being, since the form understood is only in the mind, while the form of the creature is in the thing[197].

The second implies a derivation according to the emergence proper to the divine essence due to the intensive *esse* that embraces all perfections, yet transcends them:

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[196] *De Potentia*, q. 7, a. 7 ad 2: "Similitudo creaturae ad Deum deficit a similitudine univocorum in duobus. Primo, quia non est per participationem unius formae, sicut duo calida secundum participationem unius caloris; hoc enim quod de Deo et creaturis dicitur, praedicatur de Deo per essentiam, de creatura vero per participationem; ut sic talis similitudo creaturae ad Deum intelligatur, qualis est calidi ad calorem, non qualis calidi ad calidius. Secundo, quia ipsa forma in creatura participata deficit a ratione eius quod Deus est, sicut calor ignis deficit a ratione virtutis solaris, per quam calorem generat".

[197] *De Potentia*, q. 7, a. 7 ad 6: "Inter creaturam et Deum est duplex similitudo. Una creaturae ad intellectum divinum: et sic forma intellecta per Deum est unius rationis cum re intellecta, licet non habeat eumdem modum essendi; quia forma intellecta est tantum in intellectu, forma autem creaturae est etiam in re".

> There is another likeness inasmuch as the divine essence itself is the super-eminent but not homogeneous likeness of all things. It is by reason of this latter likeness that good and the like are predicated in common of God and creatures: but not by reason of the former, because when we say God is good we do not mean to define him from the fact that he understands the creature's goodness, since it has already been observed that not even the house in the mind of the builder is called a house in the same sense as the house in being[198].

In the first case, the likeness is of a formal nature and leaves the divine intact and in isolation; in the second case, the relation becomes something real and founding (causality) in the creature. It is from the latter that the possibility of analogy arises[199].

Based on this distinction between two types of likeness, Fabro argues that the analogy of proportionality, which relates two proportions, is not the proper and radical expression of metaphysical analogy. Proportionality enters into the metaphysical order in order to express, not the direct relationship between the finite and the Infinite, but rather the structural likeness – which is proportional – that one member of the analogy has to the other. St. Thomas writes in *De Veritate*:

> Although there cannot be between the finite and the infinite a proportion properly so called, yet there can be a proportionality or the likeness of two proportions. We say that four is proportioned to two because it is the double; but we say that four is proportionable to six because four is to two as six is to three. In the same way, although the finite and the infinite cannot be proportioned, they can be proportionable, because the finite is equal to the finite just as the infinite is to the infinite. In this way there is a likeness of the creature to God, because the creature stands to the things which are its own as God does to those which belong to him[200].

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[198] *De Potentia*, q. 7, a. 7 ad 6: "Alio modo secundum quod ipsa divina essentia est omnium rerum similitudo superexcellens, et non unius rationis. Et ex hoc modo similitudinis contingit quod bonum et huiusmodi praedicantur communiter de Deo et creaturis, non autem ex primo. Non enim haec est ratio Dei cum dicitur, Deus est bonus, quia bonitatem creaturae intelligit; cum iam ex dictis pateat quod nec etiam domus quae est in mente artificis cum domo quae est in materia univoce dicatur domus".

[199] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 506.

[200] *De Veritate*, q. 23, a. 7 ad 9: "Finiti ad infinitum quamvis non possit esse proportio proprie accepta, tamen potest esse proportionalitas, quae est duarum proportionum similitudo: dicimus enim quatuor esse proportionata duobus, quia sunt eorum dupla; sex vero esse quatuor proportionabilia, quia sicut se habeat sex

Fabro argues that this text shows that the analogy of proportionality is formally semantic and presupposes a first, causal, primary and constitutive analogy of attribution[201].

In analogy, the co-existence of similarity and dissimilarity gives rise to the difficulty of determining their correct relationship[202]. Closely connected with this problem is the problem of the incommensurability between the finite and infinite[203]. In all this, however, Fabro hastens to point out that where there is not a "proportion" there cannot be "proportionality".

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ad tria, ita quatuor ad duo. Similiter finitum et infinitum, quamvis non possint esse proportionata, possunt tamen esse proportionabilia; quia sicut infinitum est aequale infinito, ita finitum finito. Et per hunc modum est similitudo inter creaturam et Deum, quia sicut se habet ad ea quae ei competunt, ita creatura ad sua propria".

[201] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 507.

[202] C. FABRO, *PC*, 507: "The dialectic or the nature of the paradoxical function of analogy consists precisely, as we have said, in the co-existence which is mutual and necessary belonging of similarity with dissimilarity and therefore in the difficulty of determining the point of their entry: the difficulty is in the 'mode' of transferring a univocal and definite semantics for homogeneous greatnesses, as that of the known terms of 'proportion' and 'proportionality', to the metaphysical sphere, which is the sphere of inequality".

[203] *In IV Sent*., d. 49, q. 2, a. 1 ad 6: "Quamvis finiti ad infinitum non possit esse proportio, quia excessus infiniti supra finitum non est determinatus; potest tamen esse inter ea proportionalitas quae est similitudo proportionum; sicut enim finitum aequatur alicui finito, ita infinito infinitum. Ad hoc autem quod aliquid totaliter cognoscatur, quandoque oportet esse proportionem inter cognoscens et cognitum; quia oportet virtutem cognoscentis adaequari cognoscibilitati rei cognitae; aequalitas autem proportio quaedam Est. Sed quandoque cognoscibilitas rei excedit virtutem cognoscentis; sicut cum nos cognoscimus Deum, aut e converso, sicut cum ipse cognoscit creaturas; et tunc non oportet esse proportionem inter cognoscentem et cognitum, sed proportionalitatem tantum; ut scilicet sicut se habet cognoscens ad cognoscendum, ita se habeat cognoscibile ad hoc quod cognoscatur; et talis proportionalitas sufficit ad hoc quod infinitum cognoscatur a finito, et e converso. Vel dicendum, quod proportio secundum primam nominis institutionem significat habitudinem quantitatis ad quantitatem secundum aliquem determinatum excessum vel adaequationem; sed ulterius est translatum ad significandum omnem habitudinem cujuscumque ad aliud; et per hunc modum dicimus, quod materia debet esse proportionata ad formam; et hoc modo nihil prohibet intellectum nostrum, quamvis sit finitus, dici proportionatum ad videndum essentiam infinitam; non tamen ad comprehendendum eam, et hoc propter suam immensitatem.

In synthesis, "*proportio*" indicates the constitutive relationship in the metaphysical sphere, while similitude is of a "dynamic nature and is at the antipodes of the formal, logical sphere. It does not appeal to the principle of identity in its *reductio ad unum*, but rather recalls the diversity which is then gathered in a superior order"[204]. In the metaphysical order there is a subordination of the "principled" to the "principle" which is made possible by participation and is expressed in analogy:

> Thus, in the strictly metaphysical field, what counts, first of all and above all, is the "mode" of being, still more than the quality [of being] and the form itself, such that the semantics of a metaphysics like that of St. Thomas – which is oriented and founded on intensive, emergent *esse* – is shown intrinsically reluctant to remain on the logical plane to express the structure of the real relation and it is for this reason that it offers, where it can, analogy founded on the causality of *esse*. The "surpassing" of which one speaks is related, therefore, to *esse* which is incommensurable to any form, and the similarity between God and the creature hinges, then, on the *ratio* or form itself[205].

From this perspective, the *prius et posterius* and *magis et minus* of perfection is also founded on the transcendence or emergence of the divine perfection. The relationship of the creature to the Creator is only able to be understood and expressed in the "dialectical formula of analogy", which, in turn, refers to the creature's situation of total dependence according to participation[206].

With this premise on the fundamental nature of analogy of proportion, Fabro takes on the problem of analogy in the predicamental and

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[204] C. FABRO, *PC*, 508. See *In IV Sent*., d. 49, q. 2, a. 1 ad 7: "Duplex est similitudo et distantia. Una secundum convenientiam in natura; et sic magis distat Deus ab intellectu creato quam intelligibile creatum a sensu. Alia secundum proportionalitatem; et sic est e converso, quia sensus non est proportionatus ad cognoscendum aliquod immateriale; sed intellectus est proportionatus ad cognoscendum quodcumque immateriale; et haec similitudo requiritur ad cognitionem, non autem prima".

[205] C. FABRO, *PC*, 508. *In I Sent*., d. 22, q. 1, a. 1 ad 3: "Quod sapientia creata magis differt a sapientia increata quantum ad esse, quod consistit in modo habendi; quam floritio prati a risu hominis: sed quantum ad rationem a qua imponitur nomen, magis conveniunt; quia illa ratio est una secundum analogiam, per prius in Deo, per posterius in creaturis existens; et secundum talem rationem significatam in nomine, magis attenditur veritas et proprietas locutionis, quam quantum ad modum significandi, qui datur ex consequenti intelligi per nomen".

[206] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 509.

transcendental spheres. He argues that, despite the apparent anarchy of texts on analogy in St. Thomas's works, there are some directive lines and fundamental principles which can be summarized as follows:

> a) There is analogy in the predicamental sphere, that of "two or more to some other third": "…as *ens* is predicated of quantity and quality with respect to substance".
> b) And there is analogy in the transcendental sphere, of "*unius ad alterum*": "*ens* is predicated of substance and accidents".
>
> While in the first analogy the two terms are found on the same plane, and are related to a third that is distinct to these which transcends them; in the second analogy, one of the terms already transcends the other and the latter is related to the former as to its proper principle and fundament and thus, also on the semantic plane, one fulfills the *reductio ad unum*[207].

Metaphysical analogy entails a convergence of the principle of similitude and the principle of participation: similitude inasmuch as analogy indicates a convenience in a form and a unity of subjects in that form; participation inasmuch as it involves a "metaphysical fall" indicated by causal dependence and real composition. On the transcendental level, the two terms (Creator and creature) manifest the greatest unlikeness and are found at the extreme points of the ontological difference. However, the creature (the finite term) receives all that it has from the Creator (the infinite term) in some way – both in the static-compositional order and in the dynamic-causal order – and conserves some likeness which is attributed in the relationship of analogy[208].

The metaphysical structure of Thomistic analogy, "insofar as it is a relationship of dissimilarity with similarity or of similarity with dissimilarity, refers in its very semantics to a relation of dependence and demands, therefore, that the *reductio ad unum* is resolved in the second of

[207] C. FABRO, *PC*, 509. See *De Potentia*, q. 7, a. 7: "In the first kind of predication the two things must be preceded by something to which each of them bears some relation: thus substance has a respect to quantity and quality: whereas in the second kind of predication this is not necessary, but one of the two must precede the other. Wherefore since nothing precedes God, but he precedes the creature, the second kind of analogical predication is applicable to him but not the first".

[208] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 510.

the terms themselves, which is precisely *Esse per essentiam*"[209]. Fabro presents five texts in confirmation of his interpretation:

[1] *Summa contra Gentiles*, I, ch. 34: Something predicated *secundum ordinem* of God and creatures is not predicated "many with respect to another" (*multa habent respectum ad aliquid unum*), but rather "one with respect to another" (*duorum attenditur respectus ad unum ipsorum*).

[2] I, q. 13, a. 5: Something predicated *secundum proportionem* of God and creatures is not predicated "many having a proportion to another", but rather "one having proportion to another".

[3] I, q. 13, a. 6: In an authentic transcendental analogy, the analogy cannot be limited to an extrinsic relationship of causality, since the divine perfections would be reduced to metaphors. These perfections, then, pertain "essentially" to God, even if our way of expressing them mirrors the mode of being that they have in creatures. God possesses the pure perfections in an eminent manner.

[4] *Compendium Theologiae*, I, ch. 27: Names are predicated of God and other things according to analogy, i.e., according to a proportion to one (*secundum proportionem ad unum*).

[5] *In I Ethic*., lect. 7, n. 95. "Goodness" is predicated *according to analogy*, i.e., according to a proportion, insofar as every goodness depends on the One first, principle-Goodness or insofar as they are ordered to one end.

After this textual confirmation and theoretical defense of St. Thomas's use of the analogy of attribution (proportion) between creatures and God, Fabro points out that St. Thomas also uses the analogy of proportionality to speak about the relationship of the creature to God. The most complete text on this type of analogy is *De Veritate*, q. 2, a. 11. In the text, St. Thomas distinguishes two types of analogy: *proportionis* and *proportionalitas*. The first is applied to substance and accidents; and because this analogy implies that between the two members there is a relationship of something "common", it is not valid in the transcendental order in the relationship between the creature and God.

Fabro interprets the choice of *De veritate*, q. 2, a. 11 for proportionality in light of *De Veritate*, q. 23, a. 7 ad 9. He holds that the

[209] C. FABRO, *PC*, 510.

latter text distinguishes two considerations of this proportionality: according to dependence (a creature stands in relation to God insofar as he is made by him and subject to him) and according to "pure proportionality" (relation of finite to finite as infinite to infinite)[210].

According to Fabro, St. Thomas's texts confirm the *metaphysical* (foundational) primacy of the analogy of intrinsic attribution: "The creature is not said to be conformed to God as to one who shares in the same form in which it shares, but because God is substantially the very form in which the creature participates by a sort of imitation. It is as if fire were likened to a separate subsistent heat"[211]. The "form" in question here is *esse*. Thus, the radical foundation of metaphysical analogy is in the causal dependence and real composition of the creature: "Wherefore it is evident that a different relationship to *esse* precludes a univocal predication of *ens*. Now God's relationship to *esse* is different from that of any creature: for he is his own *esse*, which cannot be said of any creature. Hence in no way can it be predicated univocally of God and a creature, and consequently neither can any of the other predicables among which is included even the *primum ens*"[212].

In Thomism, the participation of the creature in the Creator is not reduced to mere causal dependence or to the passage of the finite essence from possibility to reality. Rather, along with causal dependence, it touches on the structure of *ens* as such with participation in *actus essendi*. Analogy is not limited to extrinsic dependence, but rather also expresses a "transcendental relationship of structure" whose definitive expression – because of causal dependence and entitative composition – comes to a head in the notion of participation. The mode of having of the creature is "*divisim et particulariter*", while that of God is "*simpliciter et universaliter*". The difference lies in the mode of *having*: "But nothing is said of God by participation, since whatever is participated is confined to the mode of a

[210] See *De Veritate*, q. 23, a. 7 ad 9.

[211] Fabro quotes *De Veritate*, q. 27, a. 7 ad 10: "Creatura non dicitur conformari Deo quasi participanti eamdem formam quam ipsa participat, sed quia Deus est substantialiter ipsa forma, cuius creatura per quamdam imitationem est participativa; sicut si ignis similaretur calori per se separato existenti".

[212] *De Potentia*, q. 7, a. 7: "Diversa habitudo ad esse impedit univocam praedicationem entis. Deus autem alio modo se habet ad esse quam aliqua alia creatura; nam ipse est suum esse, quod nulli alii creaturae competit. Unde nullo modo univoce de Deo creatura dicitur; et per consequens nec aliquid aliorum praedicabilium inter quae est ipsum primum ens".

participated thing, and thus is possessed partially and not according to every mode of perfection"[213]. The notion of participation makes the notional expansion of analogy possible, according to its twofold aspect of dependence and structure, in conformity with the absolute emergence of act. Participation, in fact, means both causal dependence and likeness:

> In this way, the problem of analogy is intimately united to the entire orientation of Thomistic metaphysics […] according to the tension of two convergent couplets of act and potency (Aristotle), participant and participated (Plato): both, as is evident, necessarily imply the "*reductio ad unum*". The priority and principality which in the Thomistic conception belongs to the analogy called "of attribution" (*proportionis*) over that purely formal and consequent analogy of proportionality is founded on the very principle of Thomism, that of the priority of act over potency (Aristotelianism) and of act of *esse* over any other act (Platonism)[214].

In its metaphysical nucleus, Thomistic analogy expresses the dialectical relationship between belonging-to (*appartenenza*) and dependence, immanence and transcendence, causality and exemplarity[215].

5.3 The semantics of metaphysical analogy

The problem of analogy, Fabro notes, is principally that of how we predicate metaphysical terms and clarify our way of knowing with respect to reality. The problem of analogy attempts to determine the meaning of or extent of the similarity-dissimilarity between different modes of being of reality (such as between substance and accidents, God and creatures)[216]. The metaphysician should not stop at the determination of the causal relationship between two terms (a Scholastic tendency), but rather continue on like St. Thomas and establish the relationship of "likeness" between the two terms:

> If it is true that the cause works according to its form and, therefore, communicates to the effect its own likeness, it is to this likeness, then, that

[213] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 515. *Summa contra Gentiles*, I, ch. 32: "De Deo autem nihil dicitur per participationem: nam omne quod participatur determinatur ad modum participati, et sic partialiter habetur et non secundum omnem perfectionis modum".

[214] C. FABRO, *PC*, 516.

[215] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 516.

[216] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 516.

> analogical predication should be attentive. Total, causal dependence constitutes the "foundation" of metaphysical analogy, and not properly its formal *ratio* and expression[217].

In the metaphysical analogy of the relationship of creatures to God, we are limited to considering only those perfections which can be attributed to God: for example, the "pure perfections" of *esse*, *vivere, intelligere, velle,* and *amare*[218]. To understand the meaning of the analogical predication of such perfections with respect to God and creatures, we need to keep in mind that the origin of the concept and term 'analogous' comes from the side of the creature and that, therefore, the mode of signifying (*modus significandi*) depends on our mode of understanding both creatures and God: we always understand things in a concrete way according to a synthesis-composition of act and potency, of subject and perfection[219]. For now, we can leave aside the analogy-relationship of substance and accidents since there is a correspondence between the real order and semantic order, unlike the relationship of God and creatures[220].

In the problem of the analogy of being with respect to God and creatures, we see that God transcends the creature in the perfection of his being and alone possesses the pure perfections without any imperfection. Such perfections are found in him according to absolute unity and simplicity and are identical to his Subsisting Being. Between God and creatures, then, there is a similarity and dissimilarity[221]. The pure perfections are attributed

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[217] C. FABRO, *PC*, 518.

[218] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 517.

[219] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 517.

[220] *Summa contra Gentiles*, I, 34: "In huiusmodi autem analogica praedicatione ordo attenditur idem secundum nomen et secundum rem quandoque, quandoque vero non idem. Nam ordo nominis sequitur ordinem cognitionis: quia est signum intelligibilis conceptionis. Quando igitur id quod est prius secundum rem, invenitur etiam cognitione prius, idem invenitur prius et secundum nominis rationem et secundum rei naturam: sicut substantia est prior accidente et natura, inquantum substantia est causa accidentis; et cognitione, inquantum substantia in definitione accidentis ponitur. Et ideo ens dicitur prius de substantia quam de accidente et secundum rei naturam et secundum nominis rationem".

[221] *De Potentia*, q. 7, a. 5 ad 8: "In creaturis quaedam secundum quae Deo similantur, quae quantum ad rem significatam, nullam imperfectionem important, sicut esse, vivere et intelligere et huiusmodi; et ista proprie dicuntur de Deo, immo per prius de ipso et eminentius quam de creaturis". See also *De Potentia*, q. 7, a. 7 ad 2: "Similitudo creaturae ad Deum deficit a similitudine univocorum in duobus.

to God since he effectively possesses *per essentiam* every "pure" perfection, while creatures only possess the perfections *per participationem*: "When we say that God is better or that he is the sovereign good we compare him to creatures not as though he participated of the same generic nature as creatures, like the species of a genus; but as the quasi-principle of a genus"[222]. This is why the analogy of being between creatures and Creator is that of an analogy of one-to-another. The text calls to mind the argument of the Fourth Way and the demonstration of a *maximum* in a genus, which is consequently the cause of everything in that genus. Therefore, in the predication by analogy of the pure perfections we do not merely state that God is the cause of the perfection of the creature, but also that there is an "intrinsic, formal predication" of the perfection both for the creature and for God. This predication of a perfection to God, demands that we recognize that this perfection pertains *per essentiam* to God and that it transcends our comprehension. In this, the three Dionysian ways come into play:

> For this reason, our mode of understanding the pure perfections is according to the concreteness and the diversity that the same have in the creatures, these – also taken in their purity – are diversely presented and therefore, *per se*, one does not imply the other. These imply, then, a double limit: one, by being the acts of a particular subject (predicamental limitation); the other, by being one distinct from the other (transcendental limitation). Then, transferring these perfections to God, one should, first of all, present them in the purity of their essence, and then raise then to the supreme intensity insofar as all are identified with the divine essence which is pure *esse*. In the Dionysian terminology, grasped and placed at the foundation by St. Thomas, the three moments follow in order: *via causalitatis* (in God, as the first cause, are present the perfections caused in the creatures), *via negationis* (…but not according to the "mode" proper" to the creature), *via eminentiae* (…namely according to the "mode" of God)[223].

Primo, quia non est per participationem unius formae, sicut duo calida secundum participationem unius caloris; hoc enim quod de Deo et creaturis dicitur, praedicatur de Deo per essentiam, de creatura vero per participationem; ut sic talis similitudo creaturae ad Deum intelligatur, qualis est calidi ad calorem, non qualis calidi ad calidius. Secundo, quia ipsa forma in creatura participata deficit a ratione eius quod Deus est, sicut calor ignis deficit a ratione virtutis solaris, per quam calorem generat".

[222] *De Potentia*, q. 7, a. 7 ad 4: "Deus non comparatur creaturis in hoc quod dicitur melior, vel summum bonum, quasi participans naturam eiusdem generis cum creaturis, sicut species generis alicuius, sed quasi principium generis".

[223] C. FABRO, *PC*, 519.

The common term, in the analogy between God and creatures, refers to a "well-defined content", yet is only known directly in one of the members (in the creature) and not in the other (in the Creator). This is expressed by St. Thomas in his *Commentary on Liber De causis*, which states that *ens* as that which participates in *esse* in a finite manner is proportionate to our intellect, while God's essence surpasses our intellect[224]. "For this reason, the transferring of the term to the other member of the analogy is done in virtue of a resolutive-attributive judgment and therefore in the form of a transcending of predication and not of proper and direct comprehension"[225]. This reference to *resolutio* as the way in which we grasp *esse* and attribute it to God in terms of analogy should be highlighted. By means of this resolution and judgment, we determine the divine essence as *Esse Ipsum*, while admitting the limits of our mode of understanding created perfections: "Even though the *esse* of the creature imperfectly represents divine *esse*, and the name 'He Who Is' signifies this imperfectly, since it signifies it by way of a certain concretion and composition, still he is signified still more imperfectly by the other names"[226].

In the two judgments: "the creature has *esse*" and "God is his *esse*", the analogy of *esse* implies two proportions with four terms: two distinct subjects (creature, God) with a predicate (*esse*) that is both common and distinct. In this initial, logical-semantic moment, the act and perfection in the subject is presented in the form of proportionality. In an ulterior, second moment, the analogy is presented in the form of intrinsic attribution and with reference to the pure perfection that the creature has imperfectly and that the Creator has perfectly:

> When, however, the effect is not perfectly likened to the agent, as being improportionate to the agent's power, then the form of the effect is not in the same degree in the agent but in a higher degree. […] Hence the forms of

[224] *In Librum De Causis*, lect. 6: "Ens autem dicitur id quod finite participat esse, et hoc est proportionatum intellectui nostro cuius obiectum est quod quid est ut dicitur in III *De anima*, unde illud solum est capabile ab intellectu nostro quod habet quidditatem participantem esse; sed Dei quidditas est ipsum esse, unde est supra intellectum".

[225] C. FABRO, *PC*, 519-520.

[226] *In I Sent*., d. 8, q. 1, a. 1 ad 3: "Esse creaturae imperfecte repraesentet divinum esse, et hoc nomen 'qui est' imperfecte significat ipsum, quia significat per modum cujusdam concretionis et compositionis; sed adhuc imperfectius significatur per alia nomina".

> things are in the divine nature as in the power that produces them, but not according to the same degree, since no effect is equal to that power[227].

The analogy of proportionality – a similarity of two or more proportions – only constitutes an initial moment in our understanding of *esse*; yet this first moment necessarily refers to the diversity that is caused by the "ontological fall" and, consequently, to intrinsic attribution:

> The attribution, then, that is implied in metaphysical analogy is necessarily "intrinsic", insofar as it is properly by this that the very analogy of proportionality is made possible. In fact, we are dealing with an intrinsic attribution, first of all, insofar as, unlike extrinsic attribution, the perfection, here, is present in its essence (*formaliter*) in both subjects. It is then called intrinsic, insofar as the foundation of the belonging [*appartenenza*] of the pure perfection in the deficient subject (the creature) demands the presence [*intraneazione*] (*per essentiam, per potestatem, per praesentiam*) of the perfect Subject as proper cause of the participated perfection. In the end, and consequently, it is called metaphysical intrinsic attribution insofar as the created perfection, in this its total derivation, maintains a "certain" similitude with the divine source-perfection[228].

In the initial moments of metaphysical reflection on the divine perfections we understand them according to the way (mode) they are present in creatures. Only in a second moment can we elevate them in such a way as to become aware that their proper mode is that which they have in God (*per essentiam*) and that they are present in creatures according to more or less perfect degrees of imitation. This aspect of imitation is highlighted in St. Thomas's *Commentary on the Sentences*:

> I say of goodness that there is one goodness by which, as the efficient exemplary principle, all things are good. And still the goodness by which every thing is formally good is diverse in diverse things. But because universal goodness is not found in any creature, but rather one finds a particular goodness and in a certain way, as St. Augustine says that if we take away all the notions of particularity from goodness itself, the integral and full goodness

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[227] *De Potentia*, q. 7, a. 1 ad 8: "Quando vero effectus non perfecte assimilatur agenti, utpote non adaequans agentis virtutem, tunc forma effectus est in agente non secundum eamdem rationem, sed sublimiori modo [...]. Formae ergo rerum sunt in natura divina ut in virtute operativa, non secundum eamdem rationem, cum nullus effectus virtutem illam adaequet".

[228] C. FABRO, *PC*, 521.

> will remain in the intellect, which is divine goodness, which is seen in the created goodness as the exemplar in the exemplified"[229].

The creature's imitation, however, implies a formal attribution and in this case according to the way of more intrinsic and constitutive belonging. "In this way, a predication of effective 'likeness' (analogy of attribution) between the perfection of the creature and the perfection of the Creator follows (or proceeds, if we consider the order of things) the predication of a likeness of proportion (in the first moment, that of the analogy of proportionality)"[230]. In this effective "likeness", the creature is said to be similar to God and not vice versa. In the static order of being and the dynamic order of action, causality expresses the descending moment and similarity the ascending moment; thus, in analogy, attribution deals with foundation of the perfection, while proportionality with the actuation and formal expression of the perfection[231]. The pure perfection is intrinsic to God *per essentiam*, while it is intrinsic to the creature according to a participation of imitation in proportion to its degree of perfection.

For Fabro, the pure perfections represent the "metaphysical point" of encounter between creature and Creator: for this reason, metaphysical analogy implies an "intrinsic proportion"[232]. In a final series of texts, Fabro explains the importance qualifying the attribution as "intrinsic", intertwining references to proportion and proportionality, causality and formal presence, dependence and likeness:

> It is, first of all, an "intrinsic" analogy both because in the Thomistic conception, the pure perfections and *esse* are truly immanent in creatures "as inherent forms" and not only in God and because God himself as founding First Principle is intrinsic to the creature with his causality. The Thomistic formula leaves no room for doubt: "…and so each thing will be called good by reason of an inherent form because of the likeness of the highest good

[229] *In I Sent*., d. 19, q. 5, a. 2 ad 3: "Dico de bonitate, quod est una bonitas, qua sicut principio effectivo exemplari omnia sunt bona. Sed tamen bonitas qua unumquodque formaliter est bonum, diversa est in diversis. Sed quia bonitas universalis non invenitur in aliqua creatura, sed particulata, et secundum aliquid; ideo dicit Augustinus, quod si removeamus omnes rationes particulationis ab ipsa bonitate, remanebit in intellectu bonitas integra et plena, quae est bonitas divina, quae videtur in bonitate creata sicut exemplar in exemplato".

[230] C. FABRO, *PC*, 521.

[231] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 522.

[232] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 523.

implanted in it, and also because of the first goodness taken as the exemplar and effective cause of all created goodness"[233]. Therefore, we are dealing with overcoming the respective opposition that the analogies of proportionality and of attribution have had, each one being taken *per se*; since one is the fruit of the isolation of the Aristotelian moment (formal proportionality) from the Platonic moment (causal attribution), while the Thomistic conception is posited [*si pone*] from a superior point of view which embraces both and surpasses them: "a) Everything is therefore called good from the divine goodness, as from the first exemplary effective and final principle of all goodness". b) "Nevertheless, everything is called good by reason of the similitude of the divine goodness belonging to it, which is formally its own goodness, whereby it is denominated good"[234]. A more universally comprehensive formula of the entire problem is presented by the Angelic Doctor at the beginning of his activity: "The notion of truth consists in two things: in the *esse* of the thing and in the apprehension of the intellectual faculty proportionate to the *esse* of the thing. Now, even though both of these things, as we have said, are reduced to God as to the efficient and exemplary cause, still every thing participates in its created being by means of which it formally is, and every intellect participates in the light by which it correctly judges the thing, which is certainly exemplified by the uncreated light. The intellect has its operation *in se*, on which the notion of truth is completed"[235]. We are dealing with – and this is the decisive point in order to grasp the originality of the Thomistic position here – two moments, both distinct and inseparable: "Hence I say that as there is one, unique divine *esse* by means of which all things are as from the efficient, exemplary principle, and still in diverse things, there is a diverse *esse*, by which the thing formally is, so all there is one, unique truth, namely, divine truth, by which all things are true

[233] *De Veritate*, q. 21, a. 4: "Sic unumquodque dicetur bonum sicut forma inhaerente per similitudinem summi boni sibi inditam, et ulterius per bonitatem primam, sicut per exemplar et effectivum omnis bonitatis creatae".

[234] I, q. 6, a. 4: "Sic ergo unumquodque dicitur bonum bonitate divina, sicut primo principio exemplari, effectivo et finali totius bonitatis. Nihilominus tamen unumquodque dicitur bonum similitudine divinae bonitatis sibi inhaerente, quae est formaliter sua bonitas denominans ipsum".

[235] *In I Sent*., d. 19, q. 5, a. 2: "Ratio veritatis in duobus consistit: in esse rei, et in apprehensione virtutis cognoscitivae proportionata ad esse rei. Utrumque autem horum quamvis […] reducatur in Deum sicut in causam efficientem et exemplarem; nihilominus tamen quaelibet res participat suum esse creatum, quo formaliter est, et unusquisque intellectus participat lumen per quod recte de re judicat, quod quidem est exemplatum a lumine increato. Habet etiam intellectus suam operationem in se, ex qua completur ratio veritatis".

> as by the efficient, exemplary principle; still there are more truths in the created things, by means of which these are said to be true formally"[236].

Lastly, Fabro refers to analogy and its place along the itinerary of metaphysical reflection. He states that the problem of analogy follows that of the compositional structure of *ens* and the causal foundation of *esse*. The problem is resolved by means of a reduction, the notion of participation and the emergence of intensive *esse*:

> The problem of analogy or of the "predication of being" figures worthily as the conclusive moment of Thomistic metaphysics, after the two preceding ones regarding the structure of *ens* (composition) and the foundation of *esse* (causality) which correspond to the two fundamental moments, static and dynamic, of the real: like the first two, this also cannot be resolved but by means of the "reduction" to the fundamental notion of participation according to the absolute emergence that the notion of intensive *esse* assumes in Thomism[237].

5.4 The metaphysical foundation of analogy

With regard to the metaphysical *foundation* of analogy in its static-formal and dynamic-causal moments, Fabro holds that St. Thomas's thought on this metaphysical foundation is found in a mature and synthetic exposition of participation: *Quodlibetales* II, q. 2, a. 1. Fabro summarizes the outline of the article as follows:

> Here is the outline: the mode of predicating corresponds to the mode of being or of having; there are two modes of being for any act or form, being by essence or being by participation, and, thus, there ought to be two modes of predication; but, in its turn, being by participation is two-fold, namely, in the predicamental order of species and genera and in the order of *esse* and its transcendental attributes with the pure perfections. Only the latter participation implies analogy in the strict sense[238].

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[236] C. FABRO, *PC*, 523-524. *In I Sent.*, d. 19, q. 5, a. 2: "Unde dico, quod sicut est unum esse divinum quo omnia sunt, sicut a principio effectivo exemplari, nihilominus tamen in rebus diversis est diversum esse, quo formaliter res est; ita etiam est una veritas, scilicet divina, qua omnia vera sunt, sicut principio effectivo exemplari; nihilominus sunt plures veritates in rebus creatis, quibus dicuntur verae formaliter".

[237] C. FABRO, *PC*, 524.

[238] C. FABRO, *PC*, 591.

Esse, for example, is predicated *per essentiam* of God alone. Predication *per participationem* refers to the real composition of essence and *esse* in the creature: "Whenever something is predicated of another in the manner of participation, it is necessary that there be something in the latter besides that in which it participates. And therefore, in any creature the creature itself which has *esse* and its *ipsum esse* are other, and this is what Boethius says in *De Hebdomadibus*, that in all that is except the first, *esse* and what is are diverse"[239]. Thomistic analogy, Fabro writes, is concerned with and presupposes the notion of being in both analogates. This is because the Act of Being *per essentiam* created the act of being *per participationem*: "Thomistic analogy, then, is founded on a content of the concept of '*ens*' (*id quod habet esse*) which is common to the analogates, which differ due to the 'mode' of actuating the *ratio* or participated formality"[240].

After distinguishing predication *per essentiam* and predication *per participationem*, St. Thomas then distinguishes two types of participation:

> But it must be known that something is participated in in two ways. In one way it is participated in as though belonging (*quasi existens*) to the substance of the thing participating, as a genus is participated in by a species of it. However, a creature does not participate in *esse* this way. For that which falls under its definition is of the substance of the thing. But *ens* is not placed in the definition of a creature, because it is neither a genus nor a difference. Hence, it is participated in as something not belonging (*non existens*) to the thing's essence. And therefore, the question "Is it?" is different from the question "What is it?"[241].

[239] *Quodlibet.* II, q. 2, a. 1: "Quandocumque autem aliquid praedicatur de altero per participationem, oportet ibi aliquid esse praeter id quod participatur. Et ideo in qualibet creatura est aliud ipsa creatura quae habet esse, et ipsum esse eius; et hoc est quod Boetius dicit in Lib. *De hebdomad*., quod in omni eo quod est citra primum, aliud est esse et quod est".

[240] C. FABRO, *PC*, 592.

[241] *Quodlibet.* II, q. 2, a. 1: "Sed sciendum est, quod aliquid participatur dupliciter. Uno modo quasi existens de substantia participantis, sicut genus participatur a specie. Hoc autem modo esse non participatur a creatura. Id enim est de substantia rei quod cadit in eius definitione. Ens autem non ponitur in definitione creaturae, quia nec est genus nec differentia. Unde participatur sicut aliquid non existens de essentia rei; et ideo alia quaestio est an est et quid est".

For Fabro, these two participations correspond respectively to predicamental and transcendental participation: "A double participation, therefore: one predicamental of species to genus (and of individuals to species) for the constitution of the real essence; the other transcendental of beings in *esse* (of concretes in the pure actual formalities) for the constitution in act of concrete existents"[242]. Fabro concludes that the real distinction between essence and *esse* in creatures is key to the foundation of analogy as it is participated *esse* which actuates the finite substance, just as *Esse per essentiam* is Infinite, Pure Act.

St. Thomas argues that insofar as the creature's *esse* falls outside its essence, it may be called an *accidens*. In this sense, the *esse* which pertains to the question, "*An est*?" is an accident. In the proposition, "Socrates is", *esse* is predicated accidentally when it signifies either the thing's entity or the truth of the proposition[243]. Fabro stresses that the real composition of essence and *esse* is the foundation of the predicamental compositions of matter and form and substance and accidents: "But it is true that this noun *ens*, when it signifies a thing to which such *esse* is attributable, signifies the thing's essence and according to this signification *ens* is divided into the ten genera; but it is not univocal, because it does not belong to all things by the same notion; but belongs to substance *per se* and to the others in another fashion"[244].

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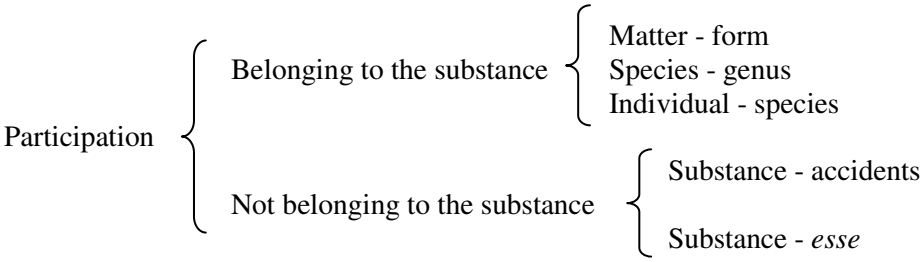
[242] C. FABRO, *PC*, 592. It could be argued that the text in question does not correspond exactly to Fabro's division between predicamental and transcendental participation. Fabro includes the participation of substance in accidents under "predicamental participation"; this, however, does not fall under the first member of the division found in *Quodlibet*. II, q. 2, a. 1, which refers to that which belongs to the substance and enters into its definition. Accidents fall outside (*praeter*) the definition of a creature. Fabro, however, is focused mainly on contrasting the univocal nature of predicamental participation with the analogical nature of transcendental participation.

[243] *Quodlibet.* II, q. 2, a. 1: "Unde, cum omne quod est praeter essentiam rei, dicatur accidens; esse quod pertinet ad quaestionem an est, est accidens. Et ideo Commentator dicit in V metaphysic., quod ista propositio, socrates est, est de accidentali praedicato, secundum quod importat entitatem rei, vel veritatem propositionis".

[244] *Quodlibet.* II, q. 2, a. 1: "Sed verum est quod hoc nomen ens, secundum quod importat rem cui competit huiusmodi esse, sic significat essentiam rei, et dividitur per decem genera; non tamen univoce, quia non eodem ratione competit omnibus esse; sed substantiae quidem per se, aliis autem aliter".

Fabro's exposition of the text stops here without considering the final lines and response to the second objection on the nature of the composition of essence and *esse*, and in what manner *esse* is called an *accidens* with respect to the substance. The final lines of St. Thomas's text in the corpus of the article affirm that the composition between essence and *esse* in creatures is not to be understood in as a composition that results from parts of the substance (like matter and form), but rather as a composition which results from the substance and that which adheres to the substance[245]. In his response to the second objection, St. Thomas clarifies in what sense *esse* is an *accidens*: "*Esse* is an accident, not as though related accidentally to a substance, but as the actuality of any substance"[246]. In this way a more precise division of participation according to the perspective of *Quodlibet.* II, q. 2, a. 1 would be:



Fabro argues that, in light of the real composition, the ultimate formula which expresses the analogy between the creature and its Creator is taken from the notion of participation: "*Esse* is not said to be similar between God and the creature according to convenience in form, according to the same notion of genus or species; but according to analogy alone, for God is *Ens per essentiam* and other [are beings] *per partecipationem*"[247]. To *esse* belongs an absolute emergence, such that with respect to all other acts and forms, only *esse* is able to be alone and separate as *Esse per essentiam*. In this case, we can speak of an absolute identity of *Esse* with itself: "This

[245] *Quodlibet.* II, q. 2, a. 1: "Si ergo in Angelo est compositio sicut ex essentia et esse, non tamen est compositio sicut ex partibus substantiae, sed sicut ex substantia et eo quod adhaeret substantiae".

[246] *Quodlibet*. II, q. 2, a. 1 ad 2: "Esse est accidens, non quasi per accidens se habens, sed quasi actualitas cuiuslibet substantiae".

[247] I, q. 4, a. 3 ad 3: "Non dicitur esse similitudo creaturae ad Deum propter communicantiam in forma secundum eandem rationem generis et speciei, sed secundum analogiam tantum; prout scilicet Deus est ens per essentiam, et alia per participationem".

identity is founded and dialectically developed by St. Thomas by means of a very precise notion of participation which, in the end, permits the ultimate and immediate *reductio ad unum* – of the diverse in the Identical, of the many in the One… – saving, at the same time, the characteristics proper to both members of the relation"[248]. In the *reductio ad unum* of metaphysical reflection, there is a clear difference between transcendental participation and predicamental participation. In the latter all things are said to participate in a common formality which does not exist in isolation, but rather is really multiplied in each participant. In transcendental participation, *Esse per essentiam*, is one alone and completely separate; thus, the multiplication of participants comes about by the "ontological fall" of a real potency which is common to all creatures insofar as they are finite realities[249].

In the real, formal structure of being (the composition of substance and accidents) or in the real, entitative structure of being (the composition of essence and *esse*), analogy repeats the essential dependence of the real order according to *prius et posterius* in the logical, semantic order. As St. Thomas writes in *Summa contra Gentiles*, I, ch. 32:

> That which is predicated of several things according to *prius et posterius* is certainly not predicated of them univocally, since that which comes first is included in the definition of what follows, for instance substance in the definition of accident considered as a being. If therefore we were to say being univocally of substance and accident, it would follow that substance also should enter into the definition of being as predicated of substance: which is clearly impossible[250].

With regard to *esse* and the entitative structure of being:

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[248] C. FABRO, *PC*, 594.

[249] See *Summa contra Gentiles*, I, ch. 32: "Omne quod de pluribus praedicatur univoce, secundum participationem cuilibet eorum convenit de quo praedicatur: nam species participare dicitur genus, et individuum speciem. De Deo autem nihil dicitur per participationem: nam omne quod participatur determinatur ad modum participati, et sic partialiter habetur et non secundum omnem perfectionis modum. Oportet igitur nihil de Deo et rebus aliis univoce praedicari".

[250] See *Summa contra Gentiles*, I, ch. 32: Quod praedicatur de aliquibus secundum prius et posterius, certum est univoce non praedicari: nam prius in definitione posterioris includitur: sicut substantia in definitione accidentis secundum quod est ens. Si igitur diceretur univoce ens de substantia et accidente, oporteret quod substantia etiam poneretur in definitione entis secundum quod de substantia praedicatur. Quod patet esse impossibile".

> Now nothing is predicated in the same order of God and other things, but according to *prius et posterius*: since all predicates of God are essential, for He is called being because He is very essence, and good because He is goodness itself: whereas predicates are applied to others by participation; thus Socrates is said to be a man, not as though he were humanity itself, but as a subject of humanity. Therefore it is impossible for any thing to be predicated univocally of God and other things[251].

In predicamental participation, the formality does not subsist *per se* in only one of the participants, nor transcend the reality-in-act of the participants; in transcendental participation, *esse* transcends all participants and all the participations and resolves them in itself in being and predication.

The likeness between God and creatures falls short of a univocal likeness in two respects. First, the likeness does not arise from participation in another one form (analogy of many with respect to another one thing), but rather from the participation of the creature in that which belongs to God essentially (analogy of one with respect to another). Second, the form in which the creature participates falls short of its *ratio* which is God[252]. Here Fabro brings into play what we saw earlier on transcendental causality and the derivation of essence and *esse*. He argues that according to the twofold transcendental participation – with respect to essence and *esse* – there is a twofold moment of analogy: "one that is formal through imitation of the divine form; another that is real through the derivation of divine causality"[253]. Univocal, predicamental participation as such is not founded

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[251] See *Summa contra Gentiles*, I, ch. 32: "Nihil autem de Deo et rebus aliis praedicatur eodem ordine, sed secundum prius et posterius: cum de Deo omnia praedicentur essentialiter, dicitur enim ens quasi ipsa essentia, et bonus quasi ipsa bonitas; de aliis autem praedicationes fiunt per participationem, sicut socrates dicitur homo non quia sit ipsa humanitas, sed humanitatem habens. Impossibile est igitur aliquid de Deo et rebus aliis univoce dici".

[252] See *De Potentia*, q. 7, a. 7 ad 2: "Similitudo creaturae ad Deum deficit a similitudine univocorum in duobus. Primo, quia non est per participationem unius formae, sicut duo calida secundum participationem unius caloris; hoc enim quod de Deo et creaturis dicitur, praedicatur de Deo per essentiam, de creatura vero per participationem; ut sic talis similitudo creaturae ad Deum intelligatur, qualis est calidi ad calorem, non qualis calidi ad calidius. Secundo, quia ipsa forma in creatura participata deficit a ratione eius quod Deus est, sicut calor ignis deficit a ratione virtutis solaris, per quam calorem generat".

[253] C. FABRO, *PC*, 595. Fabro refers the reader to *Summa contra Gentiles*, I, ch. 31, which speaks of the causal derivation of perfections in creatures: "Omnes perfectiones in rebus aliis inventas Deo attribui diximus sicut effectus in suis causis

on *direct* causal dependence; transcendental participation and the predication of *esse*, however, do involve a total, causal dependence: "Although the first cause that is God does not enter into the essence of creatures, yet *esse* which is in creatures cannot be understood except as derived from the divine *esse*: even as a proper effect cannot be understood save as produced by its proper cause"[254]. In participation, there is a total dependence of the first member (accident; the creature) on the second (substance; the Creator) in their respective orders. In this way, total real dependence expresses the metaphysical foundation and content of analogy, and is not merely a presupposition or property. The analogical relation (according to dependence) to *Esse per essentiam* necessarily pertains to finite reality insofar as it is *ens per participationem* with respect to *esse*:

> Though the relation to its cause is not part of the definition of a thing caused, still it follows, as a consequence, on what belongs to its *ratio*; because from the fact that something is an *ens* by participation, it follows that it is caused from something. Hence such *ens* cannot be without being caused, just as man cannot be without having the faculty of laughing. But, since to be caused does not enter into the *ratio* of being as such, on account of this some *ens* which is not caused is found[255].

On a merely logical plane one can admit a certain extrinsic character which pertains to participated *esse* in the finite essence; however, on the real plane, the essence exists due to the participated *esse* which is immanent to created *ens* itself: "From the very fact that being is ascribed to a quiddity, not only is the quiddity said to be but also to be created: since before it had being it

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aequivocis inveniuntur. Qui quidem effectus in suis causis sunt virtute, ut calor in sole. [...] Imitatur autem lapis Deum ut causam secundum esse, secundum bonitatem, et alia huiusmodi, sicut et aliae creaturae".

[254] *De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 5 ad 1: "Licet causa prima, quae Deus est, non intret essentiam rerum creatarum: tamen esse, quod rebus creatis inest, non potest intelligi nisi ut deductum ab esse divino; sicut nex proprius effectus potest intelligi nisi ut deductus a causa propria".

[255] I, q. 44, a. 1 ad 1: "Dicendum quod, licet habitudo ad causam non intret definitionem entis quod est causatum, tamen sequitur ad ea qua sunt de eius ratione, quia ex hoc quod aliquid per participationem est ens, sequitur quod sit causatum ab alio. Unde huiusmodi ens non potest esse, quin sit causatum; sicut nec homo, quin sit risibile. Sed quia esse causatum non est de ratione entis simpliciter, propter hoc invenitur aliquod ens non causatum".

was nothing, except perhaps in the intellect of the creator, where it is not a creature but the creating essence"[256].

The relation of dependence that the creature has on God is "constitutive" of finite *ens* since it belongs to *ens per participationem* as such. This relation of dependence is the "first relation" in finite being: "For if *esse* is the most intimate, most profound act which at the same time absolutely first and absolutely ultimate…, the relation that regards the origin of the act of *esse* is the first and fundamental one, and it is the most intrinsic relation in *ens*, as we said when speaking of the divine presence"[257]. Formally, there is a infinite distance between God's *esse*. This is accompanied, though, by his immediate, profound and total presence as First Cause: "*Esse per essentiam* cannot be said to be the first in the real order, without being recognized as the first foundation of all beings: the recognition of the universal and total dependence of the creature on the Creator is therefore the first foundation of analogy between God and the creature"[258]. In St. Thomas's metaphysics of participation, the formula of analogy between the creature and Creator is given based on the relationship of dependence of the finite on the infinite:

> The names predicated of God and of other things are attributed to God according to some relation He has to those things. […] Consequently they are predicated according to analogy, that is, according to their proportion to one thing. For, from the fact that we compare other things with God as their first origin, we attribute to God such names as signify perfections in other things. This clearly brings out the truth that, as regards the assigning of the names, such names are primarily predicated of creatures, inasmuch as the intellect that assigns the names ascends from creatures to God. But as regards the thing signified by the name, they are primarily predicated of God, from whom the perfections descend to other beings[259].

Creation expresses in the dynamic, transcendental order what the composition of essence and *esse* expresses in the static order: the "total difference" of the creature from the Creator. Both moments (creation, real composition) are formulated with the notion of participation, which, in turn,

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[256] *De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 5 ad 2: "Ex hoc ipso quod quidditati esse attribuitur, non solum esse, sed ipsa quidditas creari dicitur: quia antequam esse habeat, nihil est, nisi forte in intellectu creantis, ubi non est creatura, sed creatrix essentia".

[257] C. FABRO, *PC*, 596.

[258] C. FABRO, *PC*, 596.

[259] *Compendium Theologiae*, I, ch. 27.

constitutes the ultimate foundation of semantic moment – that of analogy. In St. Thomas's synthesis the Platonic couplet of *Esse per essentiam* and *ens per participationem* is interpreted through the Aristotelian-based metaphysics of causality and founded on the couplet of act-potency. Thus, the dependence characteristic of participation is real and total and not merely a formal inclusion of the concrete in the abstract or of the inferior genera in the superior ones. Participation involves a relation of likeness through the real derivation of participated act from the Act *per essentiam*. In the Thomistic synthesis, the dependence of participation is not merely an "image" of that which is real (Platonic) nor reduced to the "production" which presupposes prime matter (Aristotelian). The Thomistic dependence of participation comes to bear on act and potency, matter and form, essence and *esse*: "In this way, immanence and transcendence, consistency and dependence meet: the point of encounter is the metaphysics of creation, the theoretical foundation of this metaphysics is the Thomistic notion of intensive *esse* by means of the notion of participation"[260].

Based on this perspective, Fabro argues that the controversies regarding analogy, which have divided Thomists, can be clarified. Fabro outlines his argument in five points:

1) It is not about choosing between the primacy of the analogy of attribution or that of proportionality – opting for one by subordinating the other. Rather, the two analogies have an equal metaphysical dignity insofar as they represent two moments of participation: the static-constitutive moment (proportionality) and the dynamic-derivative moment (attribution)[261].

2) Both analogies intertwine with one another, yet each keeps its own character: "*esse*, which is the act of finite essence, must be understood as participated act, such that creation is the production of the whole being in its constitutive principles (act and potency) in the whole sphere of the real"[262]. In Thomistic metaphysics, one analogy demands the other since it constitutes its foundation.

3) The two analogies perfectly express the situation of *ens* from two different perfectives, such that one does not require being "complemented" by the other, yet one is related to the other in participation – which founds the two analogies, distinguishes them and brings them together: "The analogy of proportionality expresses the Aristotelian horizontal moment

[260] C. FABRO, *PC*, 597.
[261] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 597-598.
[262] C. FABRO, *PC*, 598.

(composition in the structure of *ens*), the analogy of attribution expresses the Platonic vertical moment (dependence of *ens* on *esse*): the two moments meet in the Thomistic synthesis of participation where one moment is totally *for* the other and to the degree in which one is not the other"[263].

4) The Thomistic analogy of attribution is intrinsic to *ens* due to the analogy of proportionality (static-constitutive moment) insofar as created *ens* has participated *esse* as its proper act, resulting in a real composition of essence and participated *esse*. Unlike the Suarezian position, the intrinsic nature of this analogy of attribution stems from the real composition: the creature's entire notion of being comes from God, both as regards the essence and *esse*; at the same time, the creature has its own essence and its own *esse*, as the act which actuates all the other acts of the creature[264].

5) It is within the two moments of participation – real composition and causal dependence – that one clarifies the similitude and dissimilitude implied by analogy. Aquinas has qualified the analogates as *partim eadem* and *partim diversa*, i.e., authentically similar and dissimilar. There is a twofold similarity (imitation of the divine idea and imitation of the divine nature): "The creature is truly *similar* to God, not only insofar as his essence is derived by exemplarism from the divine idea, but properly '*in rationis entis*'; it is truly *ens*, since as well as essence, it has its act of *esse* – distinct from his essence and from Divine *Esse* – which is always and only act and therefore is the first act in its order, even if it is participated"[265]. As regards dissimilarity, this is also twofold (imperfection and composition): "The creature is also as well *dissimilar* to God not only and properly because it is imperfect, finite…, but because its *esse* is received in its finite essence as act in its proper potency and therefore really distinct from the essence, while in God *esse* is identified with essence: it is in this first *Diremtion* of being in *essentia et esse* that are theoretically founded all the other characteristics indicated by the infinite distance of the creature from the Creator"[266]. In conclusion, the infinite dissimilitude of the creature to God co-exists with its similitude to God since the infinite distance co-exists with the immediate, actual *presence* of the Creator to the creature as the First Efficient, Exemplary and Final Cause[267].

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[263] C. FABRO, *PC*, 598.
[264] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 599.
[265] C. FABRO, *PC*, 599-600.
[266] C. FABRO, *PC*, 600.
[267] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 600.

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The distinction between the analogy of proportionality and the analogy of intrinsic attribution is based on two considerations of finite *ens*: one that is static and concerns the composition and constitution of finite *ens*; another that is dynamic and concerns the causal dependence of finite *ens*. According to Fabro, the analogy of proportionality concerns the static; the analogy of intrinsic attribution concerns the dynamic-causal consideration. The distinction is also based on the twofold transcendental participation of essence and *esse*: When considering the likeness of the creature to God, we see that Thomistic analogy presupposes the notion of being in both analogates. The likeness of the creature to God falls short because the likeness does not arise from a common participation in another, one form – rather, the creature participates in that which belongs to God essentially; secondly, the creature's participation in *esse* falls short of notion which is God's essence.

6. Summary

1) Our study of metaphysical reflection in *PC* has made it clear that for Fabro the proper method of Thomistic metaphysics is a type of resolution-reduction to foundation. A metaphysical knowledge of *esse* cannot be reduced to the *esse-in-actu* obtained in judgment, but rather involves a metaphysical reflection based on participation, causality and analogy. In the Introduction, Fabro hones his critique of several Thomists who hold that *actus essendi* is fully grasped in a judgment or by means the second operation of the intellect. For his part, Fabro proposes a twofold metaphysical *resolutio*: 1) from the initial notion of *ens* to the methodological notion of *ens* and 2) from the methodological notion to the determination of intensive *esse*. He also specifies resolution as a movement from more superficial acts (accidents) to *actus essendi*. This resolutive passage is a type of "foundation" which leads the metaphysician to the apprehension and emergence of *esse*.

2) Fabro's metaphysical *resolutio* takes place within the reduction of *ens* to *esse* by means of an intensification or clarification of *esse*. The *resolutio* of all acts and perfections to *actus essendi* is proper to Thomism, since other schools of thought (formalistic Scholasticism) go no further than the determination of "existence" as the fact and realization of the possible. The reduction of *ens* to *esse*, in the metaphysical determination of *ens per participationem*, is an ascending reflection which comprehends the principle

of the emergence of act, the movement of reason through predicamental perfections and the principle of "separated perfection". This includes a dialectical comparison between the formal order and the real order and ends in the affirmation or determination of *esse* as the act of all acts and perfection of all perfections. In *PC*, Fabro tries to improve upon the distinction he made in *NMP* between reflection on formal *esse* and reflection on *actus essendi*. As well, the distinction between the predicamental and transcendental order contributes to the proper understanding of the causal relationship between form and *esse*. Finite *ens* is ultimately clarified as *ens per participationem* and this requires that the metaphysician arrives to *Esse per essentiam*. The problem of causality is consequent to that of the structure of being: namely, the metaphysical consideration of principles such as "*forma dat esse materiae*" imply knowledge of the three compositions of all material being (subject-accidents; matter-form; essence-*esse*). As the Five Ways evidence, predicamental, dynamic-causal participation is the starting point for considerations of transcendental, dynamic-causal participation.

3) Taken as a whole, the entire work of *PC* argues for the need to continue the determination of *ens qua ens* – begun in *NMP* according to the notion of "structural participation" and by means of "dialectical ascension" and "resolution" – in an ascending process of metaphysical reflection according to predicamental and transcendental *causal* participation. Ultimately, the causal relationship between form and *esse* is as follows: first, form is the formal and not effective principle of *esse*. As such form is the formal, constitutive act of the substance. In material beings, form gives *esse* to matter. Secondly, there is a causal dependence of participated *esse* on form. This means that it is by means of the form that *esse* is determined. The relationship is the following: form is the determining principle of *esse*; *esse* is the actuating principle of form.

4) In the consideration of the transcendental production of essence and *esse*, Fabro argues that there is a distinction between how both are produced. The Italian version of *PC* corrects the expression "double creation" found in the French version and replaces it with the expression "double participation". Double participation, however, does not refer to two distinct and *direct* lines of participation – one between the created essence and the divine idea and one between the created *esse* and divine *esse* – but rather to the participation of created *esse* in divine *esse* and the actuation of the created essence by means of this participated, created *esse*. Fabro understands this twofold production and derivation of essence and *esse* as a "concreation". In terms of causal derivation, Fabro stresses the role of

exemplary causality in connection with the created essence and efficient causality and participation in connection with created *esse*. The derivation of the created essence from God is "mediated" and "actuated" by participated *actus essendi*; the derivation of created *esse* is normally spoken about in terms of a "direct participation". The *resolutio of act* in metaphysical reflection leads the metaphysician to the intensive notion of *esse* and the establishment of participated *actus essendi* as the source of every other act and form of the creature. In this way, Fabro avoids bifurcating participation into two systems and attributing primacy to a participation of similitude over participation of composition. In Fabro's theory, there is only one line of transcendental participation, which may be considered dynamically or statically, and in which likeness (or similarity) is seen to be consequent to and dependent on the participated *esse* that actuates the essence, substance and accidents of the creature.

5) Fabro considers the analogy of being as a "conclusive moment" of metaphysical reflection and as the "semantics of participation". Fabro speaks of analogy in terms of a "*reductio ad unum*", which is said to be characteristic of metaphysical reflection. The *reductio* (or *resolutio*) *ad unum* constitutes the proper method of metaphysics, both in its expositive analysis (the forms and modes of predicamental being) and in its conclusive synthesis (*ens per participationem* and *esse per essentiam*). In the end, Fabro's proposal for the analogy of being is very simple. First, he limits the threefold division of analogy found in *In I Sent*., d. 19, q. 5, a. 2 ad 1 to two instances of analogy of attribution. Second, he holds that the affirmation of proportionality in *De Veritate*, q. 2, a. 11 should be interpreted in such a way that analogy of intrinsic attribution is not denied (for example, in the light of *De Veritate*, q. 23, a. 7 ad 9). Fabro's theory of analogy is ultimately based on his interpretation of the Thomistic notion of participation. For Fabro, the transcendental participation of *esse* can be considered dynamically (in terms of extrinsic, causal dependence) and statically (in terms of an intrinsic structural principle of act: participated *actus essendi*). This twofold consideration of participation leads to two analogies – one that is static-structural and one that is dynamic. The first is the analogy of proportionality, which relates four terms and two proportions, and emphasizes the similarity between creature and Creator. The second is the analogy of attribution, which, relates two terms, one to another, emphasizing the causal dependence of the creature on the Creator. Both analogies are valid in the metaphysical sphere; however, the analogy of attribution may be said to have a foundational priority over the analogy of

proportionality. As well, it is the analogy of attribution which ultimately accomplishes the *resolutio ad unum* that the metaphysician seeks.

Fabro argues that several Thomists have fallen into the error of giving priority to the analogy of proportionality over the analogy of attribution since they follow the Scholastic division of *esse* into *esse existentiae* and *esse essentiae* and do not see how St. Thomas's doctrine of analogy is based on the Thomistic synthesis of intensive *esse*, the Aristotelian principle of the emergence of act and the Platonic principle of participation. Fabro gives primacy to "analogy of attribution" as it is said to be the foundation of "analogy of proportionality". Analogy entails a convergence of the principle of similitude and the principle of participation: similitude inasmuch as analogy indicates a convenience in a form and a unity of subjects in that form; participation inasmuch as it involves a "metaphysical fall" indicated by causal dependence and real composition. On the transcendental level, the two terms (Creator and creature) manifest the greatest unlikeness and are found at the extreme points of the ontological difference. However, the creature (the finite term) receives all that it has from the Creator (the infinite term) – both in the static-compositional order and in the dynamic-causal order – and conserves some deficient likeness of the Creator's perfection, which is predicated of the creature (*per participationem*) and the Creator (*per essentiam*) in the relationship of analogy.

Chapter Five

THE REDUCTION TO FUNDAMENT

After the publication of *Partecipazione e Causalità*, Fabro spent the next three decades explaining, re-proposing and, at times, clarifying his metaphysical conclusions. Fabro's work on metaphysics during this period is not found in another major volume on participation or being, but almost entirely in articles he published, his course notes, and the conferences and debates in which he participated[1].

With regard to the method and structure of metaphysical reflection, we find several recurring themes in these articles and brief works: for example, Fabro continually returns to the determination of the nature of the metaphysical "resolution of act" and "return to foundation" and to a speculative confrontation between Heidegger and Aquinas. As well, the period from 1960-1995 is marked by increased attention given to the role of *ens* as the intellect's *primum cognitum*: *esse* is in some way present and grasped as act within this initial *apprehensio entis* and it is the task of the metaphysician to allow it to emerge. In the 1980s, the titles of his courses and articles show that his metaphysical work was characterized by an increased emphasis on the "emergent" character of the act of being[2].

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[1] It should be noted that the problem of atheism and its principle of immanence as well as the problem of human freedom increasingly take center stage during this period of Fabro's thought.

[2] C. FABRO, "L'emergenza di *esse* in San Tommaso" (course taught in 1981-1982 in Perugia, recording available); "L'emergenza dell'atto di essere in S. Tommaso e la rottura del formalismo scolastico", in *Il concetto di "Sapientia" in San Bonaventura e san Tommaso* (testi della I Settimana Residenziale di Studi Medievali, Carini, ottobre 1981) ed *Officina di Studi Medievali*, Palermo 1983, 35-54. This article was also published in *Essere e Libertà* (1984) as a summary of Fabro's thought on role of the notion of participation in Thomistic metaphysics; "L'emergenza dell'atto nella riflessione speculativa", in *Cinquant'anni di Magistero teologico,* fs. Mons. Piolanti, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Roma 1985, 167-172; "L'emergenza dello *esse* tomistico sull'atto aristotelico: breve prologo, l'origine trascendentale del problema", in *L'atto aristotelico e le sue ermeneutiche. Atti del colloquio internazionale su l'atto aristotelico e le sue ermeneutiche* (Laterano 17-18-19 gennaio 1989), Herder, Roma 1990, 149-177.

1. Metaphysical reflection (1960-1969)

One of the characteristics of Fabro's work in the 1960s is his attempt to clarify the roles of *ens* and *esse* in metaphysical reflection. In light of the difficulties with the Kantian and Hegelian influence on twentieth-century Thomism, Fabro focuses on *ens* as *primum cognitum* and presents it as the solution to the problems generated by modern thought. Also characteristic of Fabro's work in this period are the frequent references to resolution and reduction as the proper method of Thomistic metaphysics.

In this first section of this chapter, then, seven works will be considered: the determination of act and the principle of the limitation of act in Thomistic metaphysics (1.1), the principle of participation and the emergence of act in the metaphysical foundation of the Fourth Way (1.2), the metaphysical foundation of being (1.3), the transcendentality of *ens-esse* and the "ground" of metaphysics (1.4), the tension between *ens*, *essentia*, and *esse* (1.5), methodological indications in an article entitled "Thomism and the Return to Metaphysics", (1.6) and, finally, a text from an encyclopedia on how we come to know *esse* in metaphysics (1.7).

1.1 Determination of act in Thomistic metaphysics (1961)

Fabro's article, "The determination of act in Thomistic metaphysics"[3], concerns an important aspect of his interpretation of Aquinas's metaphysics: the principle of the limitation of act in a metaphysics of participation. The article expounds Fabro's principal reservation against Geiger's bifurcation of participation into two "systems", arguing that by giving priority to participation by similitude, Geiger's theory leads to a self-limitation of act and, therefore, to an objection against the need for a real distinction between essence and *esse* in creatures[4]. In light of this difficulty, Fabro seeks to clarify the principle of the limitation of act in reference to the distinction between the predicamental and transcendental modes of participation.

The article begins with some methodological considerations and contrasts two approaches to Thomistic philosophy – the analytic approach

[3] C. FABRO, "La determinazione dell'atto nella metafisica tomistica", *ET*, 329-350. First published in *Filosofia e vita* 2 (1961), 18-39. I quote from the article in *ET*.

[4] See C. FABRO, "La determinazione dell'atto …", *ET*, 331, n. 4.

and the synthetic approach[5]. Fabro points out that while it is true that Aquinas took the exterior structure of Aristotle's metaphysics and terminology, his metaphysics focuses on participated *ens* according to the real distinction of essence and *esse*. This, according to Fabro, is completely foreign to Aristotelian metaphysics. Following an analytical approach with regard to the relationship between Aristotle and Aquinas means nothing more than starting from the latter's dependence on Aristotle and subsequently verifying Aquinas's use of Aristotle's terminology according to their Aristotelian meaning. The synthetic approach, on the contrary, recognizes a shift of the metaphysical axis from Aristotelian form-essence to the Thomistic notion of *esse* (*actus essendi*). In other words, it recognizes that the meanings of the fundamental notions of Aristotle's thought have been surpassed. Consequently, starting from the Aristotelian notion of act as form or essence is not the only way in which Thomistic *esse* is able to be determined. It is also possible to move from the real distinction between essence and *esse* and consequently re-dimension the Thomistic conception of Aristotelian act. This is the synthetic approach that Fabro intends to follow in the solution to the problem of the limitation of act[6].

As we saw earlier, Aristotle's metaphysics interprets the structure of the real by means of act and potency and the doctrine of the four causes. For Aristotle, act is perfection, while potency is the capacity for act such that every limitation of act occurs by means of potency[7]. According to Fabro, Aristotle holds that act is properly form (or essence); Pure Act is the pure and perfect form as absolutely perfect Intellect or Life. Fabro concludes that in Aristotelianism the concept of act is always found along the line of form (or essence).

Aquinas, however, elevates *esse* to the level of the constitutive act of *ens* and consequently, on the entitative level, he reduces form (or essence) to

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[5] In the article, Fabro uses the terms "analytical" and "synthetic" in a broad sense and not in the technical sense of analytical-resolution and synthetic-composition. From what we have seen, when used in their more technical senses, analysis clearly holds a privileged place as it is the ascending moment of the resolution of *ens* to *actus essendi* and of effects to causes within metaphysical reflection. Any synthetic movement from cause to effect in metaphysics depends on the first analytical resolution.

[6] See C. FABRO, "La determinazione dell'atto…", *ET*, 329-330.

[7] See C. FABRO, "La determinazione dell'atto…", *ET*, 330: "Per Aristotele l'atto è perfezione ed affermazione pura per sé, mentre la potenza è capacità e funzione di atto così che ogni limitazione non accade all'atto come atto ma mediante la potenza".

potency with respect to *esse*. Aquinas gives *esse* the dignity and properties of act *sic et simpliciter*; form (or essence) can and should still be called act, but always and only within its proper order.

Thus, when the determination of *ens* is considered in a radical way, *esse* is the act of *ens* and form (or essence) its potency. The principles of act – "act is prior to potency" and "act is more perfect and noble than potency"[8] – are valid first and foremost with respect to *esse*. "Act" is predicated of the other principles – like substantial form, essence and accidents – but always in reference to *esse*. In light of the originality of Thomistic *actus essendi* and of the Thomistic notion of participation, Fabro concludes that the formal-analytic method should be abandoned and that one should pursue the synthetic method of *reduction to fundament*[9]. In this section of the article, Fabro does not mean "analytic" and "synthetic" as "resolution" and "composition". Synthetic, in this article, seems to refer indirectly to the St. Thomas's "emergent synthesis" or the Thomistic *Aufhebung* of Aristotelian act and Platonic participation. Form, then, is act in the formal order of the essence; in corporeal bodies, form is said to be act with respect to matter. However, in order to be in act, form needs to be actuated by *actus essendi*. If form is act in its order, it is not act *per se*; rather, it is in act by means of participation in *esse*. This, Fabro recalls, is the fundamental meaning of the composition of essence and *esse*[10].

The synthetic approach to Thomistic metaphysics reveals that there is a twofold limitation of act. This is because there is a twofold order of act and, therefore, two participations: 1) *predicamental* participation which concerns the structure of essence with respect to form; 2) *transcendental* participation which concerns the constitution of *ens* with respect to *esse*[11].

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[8] See ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, IX, 8, 1050 *b* 2; IX, 9, 1050 *b* 4.

[9] See C. FABRO, "La determinazione dell'atto…", *ET*, 331: "The direction of recent studies on the notion of participation, understood as the genetic nucleus of Thomistic speculation in its originality, seems to leave no doubt about abandoning the analytic (systematic or formal) method in order to follow the synthetic-real one, that is, the "reduction to fundament".

[10] See C. FABRO, "La determinazione dell'atto…", *ET*, 332: "Any essence or form is in potency and is potency with respect to *esse* which is the act κατ'εξοκήν, this means that the form, in order to be in act, should be actuated by *esse* or *actus essendi*; even though the essence is act in its order, it is not *in act per se*, but rather is actuated [*diventa in atto*] by means of participation in *esse*. This is what the meaning of the composition of the creature of essence and *esse* primarily consists in".

[11] See C. FABRO, "La determinazione dell'atto…", *ET*, 332.

In material beings, the limitation of form occurs in both orders. In spiritual beings, the limitation only occurs in the constitutive, transcendental order; in the formal order, the form of spiritual creatures is said to be infinite and unlimited and in complete possession of the perfection that their form expresses. However, the "infinite" nature of the form of spiritual beings is only a *relative* infinity (*secundum quid*) and this in two ways:

[1] On the formal level, such forms cannot be said to be entirely infinite, since every creature and form pertains to a genus and is said to participate in a genus: every participation implies limitation. This is not just a logical participation, but also a real-formal participation: "every angel or angelic species shows a particular form of spirituality to the exclusion of the others"[12].
[2] On the level of being, only the *Forma Divina* is properly said to be infinite or unlimited[13], while every other form is seen to be limited in comparison to the Divine Form.

The principle of the limitation of form (limitation of the species with respect to its genus) needs to be studied more profoundly. To address this question, Fabro recalls the results of his investigations in *NMP* on predicamental participation. In brief:

> Every species *divides* the (virtual) perfection of its genus according to ascending and descending degrees of perfection (*secundum magis et minus*). Therefore, every species and form is in virtue of itself, namely in virtue of its own specific difference, the degree of perfection that constitutes it, distinguishing it within the genus, from the other species of the same genus[14].

Thus, the essence is limited in that it is only a *degree* of perfection. In summary:

> a) The essence of the material substances is limited *in two ways*, first *with respect to the species* insofar as the individuals participate in the species, and then *with respect to the genus* insofar as the species participates in the genus.
> b) The essence of spiritual substances is intrinsically limited as well insofar as each one participates in a genus.

[12] C. FABRO, "La determinazione dell'atto…", *ET*, 332.
[13] See I, q. 7, a. 2: "Aliquid praeter Deum potest esse infinitum secundum quid, sed non simpliciter".
[14] C. FABRO, "La determinazione dell'atto…", *ET*, 335.

> Without these two intrinsic participations and limitations neither the multiplication of the individuals in the common species (material substances), nor the multiplication of the species in the same genus for all predicamental substances would be possible, and in particular for the spiritual substances whose essence is bestowed by the form alone[15].

Therefore, saying that "the essence is limited *in* itself" is not the same as saying "limited *by* itself". The species is limited in material individuals by the *materia signata quantitate* and the accidents consequent upon this. It is limited *in* itself, since it is *this* essence of *this* species. In spiritual substances the species is a pure form and, even though it is not actuated in individuals, it can be said, *under a certain aspect*, to be unlimited according to the "first degree of predicamental participation" (the *individual participates in the species*). However, it is limited according to the "second degree of predicamental participation" (the *species participates in the genus*). It is from this participation or division of perfections that the marvelous order of the creation derives. Thus, spiritual essences are not limited *by* themselves – for the pure form possesses all the perfection proper to its species – but are limited *in* themselves to the degree that they express only a particular degree of perfection and act with respect to the formal *totality* of their genus. Saying that they are limited *in* themselves, then, does not refer simply to the "resulting" structure of the *ens in actu*, but also to the formal order itself[16].

To the objection that holds that the essence is not limited, but is rather only a limiting principle (just as the measure measures and is not measured), Fabro answers that metaphysics is the realm of differences, of diversity in degrees of perfection that relate to a Maximum, which functions as the criterion of measure since it is the principle and cause of all things and the fullness of all perfections. In the metaphysical sphere, the measure is "the *maximum et primum in quolibet genere*, which in the ultimate resolution is the First Principle itself". Thus, in the metaphysical sphere, the essence – every finite essence – should be called "limited" in the formal sphere itself and the Thomistic doctrine of predicamental participation is an explicit proof of this. The form or essence belongs to a genus (and is in a genus), and is determined or "terminated" by means of the addition of a difference. From the logical point of view, the genus is a formality or totality, which contains the specific differences in potency; from the metaphysical point of

[15] C. FABRO, "La determinazione dell'atto…", *ET*, 336.
[16] See C. FABRO, "La determinazione dell'atto…", *ET*, 336-337.

view, the genus is the formality or totality as intensive metaphysical perfection of which the differences of species constitute the "participations" or partial actuations. It is the genus, then, in the formal order, that can be called "not limited". The species would not be species, unless it involves a limitation[17].

This reference to the limitation of the species within the genus calls to mind Aquinas's thought on the relationship between the logical and the ontological orders. The relationship is not direct, and is best characterized as an indirect or proportional correspondence[18]. The analogy between the two compositions is found in the indetermination proper to the genus and matter – in the *modus significandi* and not the *res significata*. Matter means a part of the essence, while genus means the whole. This is why one says that the "species participated in the genus", which is the formal (indeterminate) totality, but one cannot say that the "form participates in matter" and only that "matter participates in form". Thus, this investigation of the logical-metaphysical semantics of the genus brings us to the heart of Thomistic speculation – namely, to the fundamental principal of the *limitation of act* which, Fabro argues, St. Thomas founds on the notion of participation. Because prime matter cannot exist without a form and the genus cannot subsist outside the species, every created essence is intrinsically finite and limited. Two texts of St. Thomas confirm this double limitation of form:

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[17] See C. FABRO, "La determinazione dell'atto…", *ET*, 337-338.

[18] C. FABRO, "La determinazione dell'atto…", *ET*, 341: "1) Every composition of concepts, which are not purely synonyms, should have a real foundation and, in the end, supposes a corresponding real composition on which to be founded (See *In IX Metaph*., 9, n. 1898). 2) One thing, however, is the logical composition, another is the real composition; thus the relation between the respective elements is diverse: in the former the synthesis is of concepts and supposes identity; in the latter, because it is a synthesis of real elements and principles, it supposes the real diversity of the distinct parts. 3) Thus, while the genus is a formality – only that *in se* it is still undetermined by the difference – matter is, on the contrary, not in the metaphysical line of act which is proper to the form, but is in an order of reality that is opposed to it and irreducible to it – without the possibility of a direct passage. Matter is real potency, not pure possibility, and thus, concurs with the form, which is its act, in the constitution of the corporeal substance. It is a principle of being, but the actuality comes to it from the form". In a footnote Fabro writes that this is the fundamental meaning of the axiom, "*forma dat esse*", which St. Thomas elevated from the predicamental sphere to the transcendental sphere of *esse*, in which *esse* is the primary and founding act.

> The limitation of form is two-fold. There is one in consequence of which the form of the species is limited to the individual, and this kind of limitation of form comes about through matter. There is a second, however, in consequence of which the form of the genus is limited to the nature of the species; and this kind of limitation of form does not come about through matter, but rather through a more determinate form, from which the difference is derived; for the difference when added to a genus narrows down this latter to the species. And this kind of limitation is the one that is in spiritual substances, in view of the fact that they are forms of determinate species[19].
>
> A form can be multiplied in two ways: first, by specific differences, as in the case of a generic form; in this way color is differentiated into the various species of color; secondly, by the subjects in which it inheres, for example, whiteness. Therefore any form incapable of being multiplied by specific differences cannot be multiplied at all, if it is a form that does not exist in a subject. Thus whiteness, if it were to subsist without a subject, would not be more than one[20].

In conclusion, the infinity proper to the essence of the pure forms, is only a relative infinity, which, Fabro writes, is irrelevant in the metaphysical order due to the two-fold participation to which every created form is subject: formal-real (predicamental) participation of the species in a genus, actual-real (transcendental) participation of *ens* in *esse*.

In St. Thomas's commentary on Prop. 4 of *De Causis*, added insight is found regarding the multiplicity of *esse creatum* and the "infinite" characteristic of the essence of pure, spiritual forms:

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[19] *De spiritualibus creaturis*, a. 1, ad 2: "Duplex est limitatio formae. Una quidem secundum quod forma speciei limitatur ad individuum, et talis limitatio formae est per materiam. Alia vero secundum quod forma generis limitatur ad naturam speciei; et talis limitatio formae non fit per materiam, sed per formam magis determinatam, a qua sumitur differentia; differentia enim addita super genus contrahit ipsum ad speciem. Et talis limitatio est in substantiis spiritualibus, secundum scilicet quod sunt formae determinatarum specierum".

[20] *Compendium Theologiae*, I, ch. 15: "Duplex est modus quo aliqua forma potest multiplicari: unus per differentias, sicut forma generalis, ut color in diversas species coloris; alius per subiectum, sicut albedo. Omnis ergo forma quae non potest multiplicari per differentias, si non sit forma in subiecto existens, impossibile est quod multiplicetur, sicut albedo, si subsisteret sine subiecto, non esset nisi una tantum".

> An intelligence is composed of the finite and the infinite in its being to the extent that the nature of an intelligence is said to be infinite in its power of being, but the very *esse* that it receives is finite. From this it follows that the *esse* of an intelligence can be multiplied insofar as it is participated *esse*, for the composition of the finite and the infinite signifies this[21].

Fabro comments that, in this text, "finite" refers to *esse*, while "infinite" indicates the "*potentia essendi*". Forms, though, are limited in their ontological order. Firstly, they are not limited *by* themselves, but rather *in themselves* with respect to the virtual perfection of their own genus. Secondly, they are limited with respect to *esse*. Every Thomist, Fabro says, should agree that act is *per se* infinite, unlimited, etc… However, there is no justification in the predicamental or the transcendental order to say: "Form is act, therefore it is infinite". For the created form or species participates in the genus and every created *ens*, form and perfection participates in *esse*. Fabro's article concludes that: "All good Thomists agree that in general only potency can limit act and that, in particular, it is the essence that limits *esse*, but the essence can only limit insofar as it is limited *in se*, insofar as every form is *talis et talis*"[22]. *Ipsum esse*, in Thomism, has been promoted to *primum metaphysicum* and is truly qualified as act in a fully constitutive sense, since all other realities, forms and perfections, fall to potency and are its participations since they a intrinsically marked by the limit of being.

* * *

Fabro's article brings out two complementary methods or ways of metaphysical reflection: the analytic and the synthetic. The analytic merely re-affirms the Aristotelian meaning of certain elements in Thomistic metaphysics; the synthetic proposes seeing how those same elements are re-dimensioned in light of the original elements of Thomistic metaphysical speculation on *esse* and participation. Fabro's article offers the example of how – following the synthetic method – the real distinction between *essentia* and *esse* in creatures re-dimensions the Aristotelian concept of act and

[21] *In Librum De Causis*, lect. 4: "[I]ntelligentia est composita in suo esse ex finito et infinito, in quantum natura intelligentiae infinita dicitur secundum potentiam essendi; et ipsum esse quod recipit, est finitum. Et ex hoc sequitur quod esse intelligentiae multiplicari possit in quantum est esse participatum: hoc enim significat compositio ex finito et infinito".

[22] C. FABRO, "La determinazione dell'atto…", *ET*, 350.

solves the problem of the limitation of the form by reducing form, which is act in its proper order, to potency with respect to *esse*.

The nature of this reduction of form and all other formal acts and perfections to "potency" or to "participants" is one of the more important elements in Fabro's method of metaphysical reflection as it involves the notion of predicamental participation. Such reflection goes beyond a merely logical consideration of the species-genus participation, considering it, in this article, as a real-formal participation. Thus, the essence of a spiritual creature is only relatively infinite (*secundum quid*) and belongs to a genus. On the formal level, the essence is limited *in* itself – not *by* itself – since it does not realize the entire virtual perfection of the genus to which it belongs. The language of "limit" calls to mind that of "measure" and the ultimate resolution-reduction characteristic of the Fourth Way to the First Principle, the *Maximum Ens*, the Cause of all things and the fullness of all perfection. In this way, Fabro has defended the principle of the limitation of act as one of the pillars of the Thomistic metaphysics of *esse* and participation[23].

1.2 The metaphysical fundament of the Fourth Way (1965)

Fabro's article, "The Metaphysical Fundament of the Fourth Way"[24], continues the arguments presented in Fabro's 1954 article on the Fourth Way. The first part of the article contains three methodological observations. The first refers to one of the difficulties of the Fourth Way in the *Summa Theologiae*: namely, how to move from the formal plane of perfection to the real plane of causality. This seems to refer to the distinction Fabro made between the initial, metaphysical reflection on formal perfections, the resolution to *esse* as plexus of all perfections and the subsequent metaphysical reflection on *esse* as real act and according to causal participation. Fabro's second observation is that while two of the formulations of the Fourth Way (*Summa contra Gentiles*, I, ch. 13 and

[23] In his *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas* (1995) R. te Velde argues that the principle "*Actus non limitatur nisi per potentiam propriam*" is not a genuine Thomistic principle. He references Fabro's argument in the conclusion to *NMP* and concludes that: "According to Fabro, the essence, as a particular degree of perfection, is limited in itself, and consequently limits the *esse* with which it is composed. I am unable to see where the solution is in this answer" (p. 151, n. 37).

[24] C. FABRO, "Il fondamento metafisico della *IV Via*", *Doctor Communis*, 19 (1965), 49-70; reprinted in *ET*, 387-406.

Summa theologiae, I, q. 2, a. 3) can be said to "precede" the demonstration of creation and that of the real distinction of essence and *esse* in creatures, the same cannot be said of many other texts, especially of St. Thomas's *Commentary* on the *Prologus* of St. John's Gospel[25]. Fabro, then, allows for a certain flexibility in the epistemological placement of the demonstration and emphasizes that he is primarily concerned with the role of participation in all three "demonstrations": the demonstration of the existence of God, the demonstration of creation and the demonstration of the real distinction. The third observation concerns the meaning of the term "*via*": St. Thomas, he notes, prefers "*via*" to "argument" and "*modus*". The term "via" is of Neo-platonic origin and indicates the road to be followed in order to achieve an end; it embraces the dynamic structure of the entire process that brings the person to recognize the need for the existence of the Absolute[26].

Of particular interest for us is what Fabro says about the similarities and differences between the demonstration of God's existence and the demonstration of creation[27]. For example, Fabro writes that in *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 44, a. 1, the "heart of the argument of creation is reduced in substance, be this with other formulations, to the Fourth Way, with the difference that the principle of participation is announced in an explicit way"[28]. From a methodological and didactic standpoint[29], Fabro argues, the two demonstrations do not coincide completely. However, from the point of view of the content or substance of the two demonstrations, both are adequately and conclusively expressed by means of the principle of participation which is at the foundation of the various forms of both arguments – namely, the total dependence of all things on God[30]. The demonstration of creation certainly constitutes an advance with respect to the demonstration of the existence of God, yet if it did not result that God is

[25] See C. FABRO, "Il fondamento metafisico della *IV Via*", *ET*, 390.

[26] See C. FABRO, "Il fondamento metafisico della *IV Via*", *ET*, 391.

[27] This problem was noted earlier when dealing with the critiques of Owens and Sanmarchi of Fabro's theory on the critical justification of the principle of causality.

[28] C. FABRO, "Il fondamento metafisico della *IV Via*", *ET*, 396.

[29] Such a methodological separation is found in the *Summa contra Gentiles* and *Summa Theologiae*.

[30] See C. FABRO, "Il fondamento metafisico della *IV via*", *ET*, 398.

the Creator of being as such, such initial proofs for God's existence would no longer be sufficient[31].

Instead of distinguishing three principles or moments in the Fourth Way as he did in 1954, Fabro prefers to combine all three moments under one principle, "the principle of the unity and emergence of act". This is a principle that can be said to sustain the entire procedure of the Fourth Way[32]. The "principle of act" is primarily Aristotelian and is understood in terms of the "perfection" of being which is proper to both material and spiritual form. The "principle of unity and emergence" is Platonic and, in St. Thomas, assumes a decisive and conclusive value in regard to the Platonic term of "*perfectio separata*", which must be unique and most perfect: "The principle and the term of *esse subsistens* or *per essentiam*, to indicate God or the discovery of *esse* as pure and primary act or as the '*perfectio separata*' *per essentiam*, is proper to St. Thomas"[33].

The key to the demonstration of the Fourth Way (and creation) is the principle of causality formulated according to the notion of participation. Thus, Fabro dedicates the rest of the article to examining the progression of the formulations which lead up to *Summa Theologiae*'s participation formulation of the principle of causality: "From the fact that something is by participation it follows that it is caused from another"[34].

1) In Aquinas's *Commentary* on the *Sentences* we find the principle expressed as follows: "Everything that is *imperfect* in a genus arises from

[31] See C. FABRO, "Il fondamento metafisico della *IV via*", *ET*, 398: "Nella dimostrazione della creazione certamente si fa un passo avanti rispetto alla prima dimostrazione dell'esistenza di Dio, ma è anche chiaro che se Dio non risultasse creatore dell'essere come tale, Dio non sarebbe Dio e quindi quelle stesse prove iniziali non sarebbero più in sé sufficienti".

[32] See C. FABRO, "Il fondamento metafisico della *IV via*", *ET*, 399.

[33] C. FABRO, "Il fondamento metafisico della *IV via*", *ET*, 399.

[34] I, q. 44, a. 1 ad 1: "Ex hoc quod aliquid est per participationem sequitur quod sit causatum ab alio". See also I, q. 65, a. 1: "Si enim diversa in aliquo uniantur, necesse est huius unionis causam esse aliquam, non enim diversa secundum se uniuntur. Et inde est quod, quandocumque in diversis invenitur aliquid unum, oportet quod illa diversa illud unum ab aliqua una causa recipiant; sicut diversa corpora calida habent calorem ab igne. Hoc autem quod est esse, communiter invenitur in omnibus rebus, quantumcumque diversis. Necesse est ergo esse unum essendi principium, a quo esse habeant quaecumque sunt quocumque modo, sive sint invisibilia et spiritualia, sive sint visibilia et corporalia".

that in which the nature of the genus is first and perfectly found to be"[35]. This formulation already contains the "metaphysical emergence of act" which is at the foundation of the Fourth Way. Fabro explains that the notion of *imperfection* depends on the notion of perfection. Perfection, in turn, is act and being-in-act. In this way, the total dependence of all things on God is attested to the diversity and multiplicity of their perfections which reveal that they are limited and imperfect.

The argument from St. Thomas's *Commentary on the Sentences* is considered in the *Summa contra Gentiles* in terms of a "structural analysis at the level of the unity and emergence of act" in order to provide the ultimate reason for the universal dependence of the finite on the Infinite. Fabro highlights four formulations found in Book II, ch. 15 and tries to evidence the notional progression of the formulations.

2) Participation according to *Diremtion* or metaphysical alternative: "For whatever belongs to a thing otherwise than as such, belongs to it through some cause, as white to a man"[36]. The reason is that it is impossible for any one thing to be predicated of two things unless one of the predications involves causality. With regard to being, it is impossible that there are two different things, neither of which has a cause. Either both things have being by a cause or one is the cause of the other's being (as in the case of God and the creature)[37].

3) Proof of degrees: "That which belongs to a thing by its nature, and not by some other cause, cannot be diminished and deficient therein" [38]. When one thing belongs to another according to a gradation of more or less, then it does not belong through its nature alone, but through some other cause. "Consequently that [cause] will be the cause of all [the others] in a certain genus, to which thing the predication of that genus belongs above all; hence that which is hottest is seen to be the cause of heat in all things hot, and that which is *maxime lucidum* is the cause of all things that have

[35] *In II Sent*., d. 1, q. 1, a. 2: "Constat enim quod omne quod est in aliquo genere imperfectum, oritur ab eo in quo primo et perfecte reperitur natura generis: sicut patet de calore in rebus calidis ab igne".

[36] *Summa contra Gentiles*, II, ch. 15: "Omne enim quod alicui convenit non secundum quod ipsum est, per aliquam causam convenit ei, sicut album homini".

[37] See C. FABRO, "Il fondamento metafisico della *IV via*", *ET*, 401.

[38] *Summa contra Gentiles*, II, ch. 15: "Quod alicui convenit ex sua natura, non ex alia causa, minoratum in eo et deficiens esse non potest. Si enim naturae aliquid essentiale subtrahitur vel additur, iam altera natura erit: sicut et in numeris accidit".

light. Now God is *maxime ens*"[39]. Fabro notes that the formulation is more complicated, but at the same time theoretically more rigorous than that of the Fourth Way of the *Summa Theologiae*.

4) Commonness and unity of act: "*The order of causes should correspond to the order of effects*…. Wherefore, as proper effects are reduced to their proper causes, so that which is common in proper effects should be reduced to some common cause: … Now being is common to all. Therefore above all causes there must be a cause to which it belongs to give being"[40]. The argument is taken up and studied in Chapter 16: "The more universal an effect, the higher its proper cause… Now *esse* is more universal than to be moved… It follows therefore that above the cause which acts only by causing movement and change, there is that cause which is the first principle of being"[41]. Emergence of effects, emergence of causes up to the first effect which is *Esse* as first constitutive and proper Act of the First Cause.

5) Participation formulation: "That which is said *per essentiam* is the cause of all which is said to be by participation: as fire is the cause of all fiery things insofar as likewise. God then is *ens* by his essence: since he is *ipsum esse*. Now every other *ens* is *ens* by participation: since the *ens* that is its *esse* cannot be but one"[42]. Fabro comments that this is the Platonic

[39] *Summa contra Gentiles*, II, ch. 15: "Quod igitur alicui minus convenit quam aliis, non convenit ei ex sua natura tantum, sed ex alia causa. Illud igitur erit causa omnium in aliquo genere cui maxime competit illius generis praedicatio: unde et quod maxime calidum est videmus esse causam caloris in omnibus calidis, et quod maxime lucidum causam omnium lucidorum. Deus autem est maxime ens".

[40] *Summa contra Gentiles*, II, ch. 15: "Secundum ordinem effectuum oportet esse ordinem causarum: [...]. Unde oportet quod, sicut effectus proprii reducuntur in causas proprias, ita id quod commune est in effectibus propriis, reducatur in aliquam causam communem: [...]. Omnibus autem commune est esse. Oportet igitur quod supra omnes causas sit aliqua causa cuius sit dare esse".

[41] *Summa contra Gentiles*, II, ch. 16: "Quanto aliquis effectus est universalior, tanto habet propriam causam altiorem: [...]. Esse autem est universalius quam moveri: [...]. Oportet ergo quod supra causam quae non agit nisi movendo et transmutando, sit illa causa quae est primum essendi principium".

[42] *Summa contra Gentiles*, II, ch. 15: "Quod per essentiam dicitur, est causa omnium quae per participationem dicuntur: sicut ignis est causa omnium ignitorum inquantum huiusmodi. Deus autem est ens per essentiam suam: quia est ipsum esse. Omne autem aliud ens est ens per participationem: quia ens quod sit suum esse non

principle of "separated perfection" and that in Thomism this is only valid for *esse* and really applied to *esse*. The Aristotelian notion of act is applied to *esse* and only *Esse ipsum* is the *causa entis in quantum est ens*. This is the essence of the Fourth Way. Three "Neo-platonic" lines encourage Aquinas along this way. Fabro summarizes them as follows:

a) *Ex simplicitate actus (essendi)* – God as *Ipsum suum esse* = Avicenna
b) *Ex intensitate actus* (*essendi*) – God as the *plenitudo essendi* = Pseudo-Dionysius.
c) *Ex communitate* (*seu prioritate*) *actus* (*essendi*) – God as *causa propria actus essendi* = *De Causis*[43].

In light of this Fabro argues that the "*resolutio in esse*" provides the authentic metaphysical foundation of the formula of the Fourth Way of the *Summa Theologiae*. The third line mentioned above (*De Causis*) constitutes the *extrema ratio* as a *resolutio in Unum*. Such a formula is found in *De Potentia*, q. 7, a. 2[44]. Here Fabro argues that we are dealing with a rigorous procedure: first, because the foundation of the causality of *esse* is the point of arrival of St. Thomas's philosophical historiography[45]; second, because there is a convergence, based on the argument of participation, in the speculative moments of the causality of *esse* and the composition of essence and *esse* in the demonstration of God's existence[46].

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potest esse nisi unum ut in primo ostensum est. Deus igitur est causa essendi omnibus aliis".

[43] C. FABRO, "Il fondamento metafisico della IV via", *ET*, 402.

[44] *De Potentia*, q. 7, a. 2: "Si [aliquae causae] in aliquo uno effectu conveniunt, ille non est proprius alicuius earum, sed alicuius superioris, in cuius virtute agunt; [...]. Omnes autem causae creatae communicant in uno effectu qui est esse, licet singulae proprios effectus habeant, in quibus distinguuntur. Calor enim facit calidum esse, et aedificator facit domum esse. Conveniunt ergo in hoc quod causant esse, sed differunt in hoc quod ignis causat ignem, et aedificator causat domum. Oportet ergo esse aliquam causam superiorem omnibus cuius virtute omnia causent esse, et eius esse sit proprius effectus.Et haec causa est Deus".

[45] See *De substantiis separatis*, ch. 9; I, q. 44, a. 2; *De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 5.

[46] Fabro's second point argues that the rigor of the metaphysical procedure of the Fourth Way is also attested to by the convergence towards the argument of participation in two other fundamental speculative moments: the causality of *esse* and the composition of essence and *esse*. "The *Prologus*, which intends to demonstrate the existence of God, makes an explicit reference to the emergence of *esse* thanks to the identity of *esse* and essence in God, unlike the composition that is proper to creatures" (p. 405).

In arguing the first point, Fabro turns to the text of *De substantiis separatis*, ch. 9, which divides the itinerary toward the ultimate origin of things into four stages according to causality[47]: 1) The first philosophers dealt solely with external change and accidental changes; they did not go beyond the distinction between substance and accidents[48]. 2) Other philosophers proceeded further and investigated the origin of substances themselves and asserted that certain substances had a cause of their *esse*; they did not go beyond reducing sensible substances to corporeal principles[49]. 3) Later philosophers resolved sensible substances into their essential parts: matter and form; in this way, they explained the *fieri* of natural things (substantial change) making matter the subject of the different forms[50]. 4) According to the teaching of Plato and Aristotle, it is necessary to posit a higher mode of "becoming" beyond that of substantial change[51]. This higher mode of "becoming" involves the bestowal of *esse* itself to the entire universe (creation):

[47] Earlier in the article (p. 395-396) Fabro presented two similar texts, I, q. 44, a. 2 and *De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 5, side by side.

[48] See *De substantiis separatis*, ch. 9: "Paulatim enim humana ingenia processisse videntur ad investigandam rerum originem. Primo namque in sola exteriori mutatione, rerum originem consistere homines aestimaverunt. Dico autem exteriorem originem, quae fit secundum accidentales transmutationes. Primi enim philosophantes de naturis, rerum fieri statuerunt nihil esse aliud quam alterari; ita quod id quod est rerum substantia, quam materiam nominabant, sit principium primum penitus non causatum. Non enim distinctionem substantiae et accidentis intellectu transcendere poterant".

[49] See *De substantiis separatis*, ch. 9: "Alii vero aliquantulum ulterius procedentes, etiam ipsarum substantiarum originem investigaverunt, ponentes aliquas substantias causam sui esse habere. Sed quia nihil praeter corpora mente percipere poterant, resolvebant quidem corporales substantias in aliqua principia, sed corporalia, ponentes ex quibusdam corporibus congregatis alia fieri, ac si rerum origo in sola congregatione et segregatione consisteret".

[50] See *De substantiis separatis*, ch. 9: "Posteriores vero philosophi ulterius processerunt, resolventes sensibiles substantias in partes essentiae, quae sunt materia et forma: et sic fieri rerum naturalium in quadam transmutatione posuerunt, secundum quod materia alternatim diversis formis subiicitur".

[51] Fabro argues that the attribution to Plato and Aristotle of this mode of causality is certainly a speculative extension of their principles according to Aquinas's synthetic, intensive exegesis. See *De substantiis separatis*, ch. 9: "Sed ultra hunc modum fiendi necesse est, secundum sententiam Platonis et Aristotelis, ponere alium altiorem".

> For, since it is necessary that the First Principle be most simple, this must of necessity be said to be not as participating in *esse* but *Ipsum esse existens*. But because subsistent *esse* can be only one, as was pointed out above, then necessarily all other things under it must be as participants in *esse*. Therefore there must take place a certain common resolution in all such things according as each of them is resolved by the intellect into that which is and its *esse*. Therefore, above the mode of becoming (*fieri*), by which something becomes when form comes to matter, we must presuppose another origin for things according as *esse* is bestowed upon the whole universe of things by the First Being that is its own *esse*[52].

St. Thomas's references to resolution – of sensible substance into matter and form and of *ens* into *id quod* (*essentia*) and *esse* – should not be passed over lightly. Fabro does not dwell on this point, but the text seems to be one of his source-texts for the notion of *resolutio* as metaphysical method. Fabro also connects the final stage with the formula of the Fourth Way in St. Thomas's *Commentary* on the *Prologus*. Unlike the Fourth Way in the *Summa Theologiae*, the reduction of participated *esse* to *Esse per essentiam* is explicit[53].

J. Aertsen's work has duly emphasized the importance of such texts in our understanding of the method and structure of Thomistic metaphysics. In

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[52] *De substantiis separatis*, ch. 9: "Cum enim necesse sit primum principium simplicissimum esse, necesse est quod non hoc modo esse ponatur quasi esse participans, sed quasi ipsum esse existens. Quia vero esse subsistens non potest esse nisi unum, sicut supra habitum est, necesse est omnia alia quae sub ipso sunt, sic esse quasi esse participantia. Oportet igitur communem quamdam resolutionem in omnibus huiusmodi fieri, secundum quod unumquodque eorum intellectu resolvitur in id quod est, et in suum esse. Oportet igitur supra modum fiendi quo aliquid fit, forma materiae adveniente, praeintelligere aliam rerum originem, secundum quod esse attribuitur toti universitati rerum a primo ente, quod est suum esse".

[53] *Lectura super Evangelium Ioannis*, *Prologus*: "Quidam autem venerunt in cognitionem Dei ex dignitate ipsius Dei: et isti fuerunt Platonici. Consideraverunt enim quod omne illud quod est secundum participationem, reducitur ad aliquid quod sit illud per suam essentiam, sicut ad primum et ad summum; sicut omnia ignita per participationem reducuntur ad ignem, qui est per essentiam suam talis. Cum ergo omnia quae sunt, participent esse, et sint per participationem entia, necesse est esse aliquid in cacumine omnium rerum, quod sit ipsum esse per suam essentiam, idest quod sua essentia sit suum esse: et hoc est Deus, qui est sufficientissima, et dignissima, et perfectissima causa totius esse, a quo omnia quae sunt, participant esse".

Nature and Creature (1988), Aertsen brings out the correlation between the history of philosophy and the systematic order of knowing: "the historical reason is the discursive reason". The historical way of philosophy proceeds as a rational discursion; it goes from the many to the one; from what is sensible to intelligible truth. "The historical way proceeds 'by way of resolution' – in *De substantiis separatis*, the terms 'to resolve' and 'resolution' are used a number of times. It is a reduction to the ontologically prior. Thomas places the history of philosophy in the perspective of the question concerning the origin of being"[54].

In the process of historical "analysis", three main phases can be distinguished: 1) In the first stage, becoming is dealt with only as "alteration", for each thing becomes from a being actually existing. 2) In the second stage, philosophers "start from a primary matter which is purely potential. Through the coming of form to this indeterminate subject, it is brought into act. For these substantial changes ('generation') they accept more general causes, such as the oblique circle of the sun according to Aristotle or the Ideas according to Plato"[55]. This stage, as I, q. 44, a. 2 brings out, remains at the level of categorical or predicamental causality. "Generation, whereby a form comes to matter, is 'the making of a particular being', which explains the becoming of a being inasmuch as it is *this*, 'but not inasmuch as it is, universally' (*non autem in quantum est ens universaliter*), because there preexisted a being that is trans-form-ed into this being"[56]. 3) The third and final stage begins when some thinkers raised themselves up to the consideration of being as *being* (*ens in quantum est ens*)[57]. In this ultimate, metaphysical analysis *id quod est* is reduced to its *esse*:

> These philosophers considered the causes of things not only insofar as the things are *these* beings or *such* beings but also insofar as they are *beings*. They were the only ones to have posited that reality in its totality was brought into being by the first being, God. Human reflection thereby definitively transcends the categorical level of becoming, of particular causality. This procession of all being from the universal cause is not a process of becoming, because it no longer presupposes anything. To produce being absolutely pertains to the

[54] J. AERTSEN, *Nature and Creature*, 198.

[55] J. AERTSEN, *Nature and Creature*, 199.

[56] J. AERTSEN, *Nature and Creature*, 200.

[57] In this regard we can recall *In Boethii De Trinitate*, q. 6, a. 1, which holds that *resolutio secundum rationem* ends in the *consideratio entis*.

essence of creation[58].

Aertsen concludes his reflection by showing how the three stages in the history of the consideration of being correspond to a threefold distinction in the structure of being, in causality[59] and in "becoming"[60]. Graphically, these three stages are as follows[61]:

Stage	Structure	Causality	"Becoming"
I	Subject-accidents	Particular	*Alteratio*
II	Matter-form	More universal	*Generatio*
III	Essence-*esse*	*Divina*	*Creatio*

Fabro returns to these three stages in a 1974 article, which we will look at shortly (2.5). Here, I would like to jump ahead to this text and highlight Fabro's characterization of the three stages we have mentioned. As regards the constitution of *ens* and its compositions, Fabro writes: "St. Thomas moves by referring *ens* to its principles, operating by stages, namely, from the appearing that *ens* presents by means of the accidents in its essential constitution *ut tale ens* (essence as synolon of matter and form, substance and accidents) to the radical constitution of *ens ut ens* (of *essentia* and *esse*)"[62]. As regards the theme of causality (accidental change, substantial change, creation), Fabro writes:

> St. Thomas distinguishes three levels: appearance with respect to the accidental changes on the foundation of substance which contains the

[58] J. AERTSEN, *Nature and Creature*, 200.

[59] See *In VI Metaph*., lect. 3: "Invenitur autem in rebus triplex causarum gradus. Est enim primo causa incorruptibilis et immutabilis, scilicet divina; sub hac secundo est causa incorruptibilis, sed mutabilis; scilicet corpus caeleste; sub hac tertio sunt causae corruptibiles et mutabiles. Hae igitur causae in tertio gradu existentes sunt particulares, et ad proprios effectus secundum singulas species determinatae: ignis enim generat ignem, et homo generat hominem, et planta plantam".

[60] See *In VIII Phys*., lect. 2, 975: "Quorum primi consideraverunt causas solarum mutationum accidentalium, ponentes omne fieri esse alterari: sequentes vero pervenerunt ad cognitionem mutationum substantialium: postremi vero, ut Plato et Aristoteles, pervenerunt ad cognoscendum principium totius esse".

[61] See J. AERTSEN, "La scoperta dell'ente in quanto ente", 41-42.

[62] C. FABRO, "Il nuovo problema dell'essere e la fondazione della metafisica", 481.

> accidents, becoming with respect to the substantial changes on the foundation of the composition of matter and form thanks to the immanence-emergence of the form over matter and over the synolon, the primary origin of creation thanks to the immanence-emergence of *esse* over form and over *ens*[63].

It should also be noted that this threefold structure of substance-accidents (accidental multiplicity and change), matter-form (substantial multiplicity and change), essence-*esse* (finite perfection, limitation of act and creation) is already present in Fabro's *Metaphysica* (1949).

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Fabro characterizes the Fourth Way as involving a passage from the plane of formal perfections to the real plane of causality. This is in agreement with Fabro's proposal of undertaking an initial, formal resolution of all perfections to *esse* in metaphysics before embarking on a real resolution of *esse* according to act and causality. Fabro argues that there is a pedagogical difference (and not a speculative one) between Fourth Way in the demonstration of God's existence as *Primum Ens* and in the demonstration of creation *ex nihilo* and the real distinction in creatures. From such a pedagogical perspective, the demonstration of God's existence *precedes* the demonstration of creation: the production of *esse* from nothing. On the other hand, the metaphysical content of both demonstrations (their speculative unity), is founded in the principle of participation and concerns the ultimate determination of *ens qua ens*.

With regard to the speculative content of the demonstration, Fabro coins a new term to refer to the three moments or principles outlined in the 1954 article on the Fourth Way: "the principle of the unity and emergence of act". Included in this principle are the Aristotelian principle of the emergence of act and the Platonic principle of separated perfection.

A substantial part of the article is dedicated to the progression of the participation formula of the principle of causality. St. Thomas first formulas concern perfection-imperfection; later formulas concern the commonness and emergence (priority) of *esse ut actus* according to the notion of participation. Fabro holds that the arguments that emphasize the commonness and priority of the act of being are based on *De Causis* and call this an authentic *resolutio in esse*. The radical commonness of *esse*

[63] C. FABRO, "Il nuovo problema dell'essere e la fondazione della metafisica", 481-482.

requires a common cause, capable of producing *esse* from nothing. Thus, we are dealing with the problem of the causality of *esse*.

Fabro's analysis of St. Thomas's philosophical historiography shows how metaphysics ought to progress from the phenomenon of accidental change and the distinction between substance and accidents through the problem of substantial change and to the problem of creation in light of the distinction between essence and *esse*. St. Thomas's *De substantiis separatis* explicitly speaks of a resolution into principles (resolution into matter and form; resolution into *id quod est* and *esse*). In the conclusion of the article, Fabro argues that the chronological reading of St. Thomas's works reveals how *esse* is increasingly expressed through the notion of participation, which, in turn, is involved in the major metaphysical themes of causality, real composition and analogy. All three moments were highlighted in the conclusion to *PC*.

In all, it is difficult to grasp Fabro's proposal in the article with respect to his other works. I venture to argue that while the 1954 article concentrated on the problems regarding the formal resolution of essence and dialectic of *magis et minus*, this article highlights some elements of the real resolution of *esse* according to act and causality. The resolution of act is highlighted in Fabro's analysis of *De substantiis separatis* and the itinerary he outlines from the problem of substance-accidents to that of essence-*esse*. Secondly, Fabro highlights St. Thomas's argumentation for a universal cause of *esse*, tracing the development of such argumentation and bringing out the convergence on the notion of participation in such argumentation. Fabro returns to the theme of resolution, the role of the demonstration of the existence of God in the article that follows.

1.3 Notes for the metaphysical foundation of being (1966)

In 1966, Fabro published an article in French entitled: "*Notes pour la fondation métaphysique de l'être*"[64]. The article contains one of Fabro's more mature treatises on how *esse* is "determined" in metaphysical reflection; it begins by characterizing the essential moment of philosophy as "the reduction to principle" and the process of foundation "as a passage from the immediateness of experience to reflection"[65]. This reduction and process is configured as the founding of beings on Being (*les étants dans*

[64] C. FABRO, "Notes pour la fondation métaphysique de l'être", *Revue Thomiste* 74 (1966), 214-237. Reprinted in *TPM*, 291-317.

[65] C. FABRO, "Notes pour la fondation métaphysique de l'être", *TPM*, 291.

l'Être). *Ens*, for St. Thomas, is immediately evident and is the *quasi-notissimum*. In the first notion of *ens*, there is a content (*quod, Was*) and an act or existential fact (*Dass*). However, neither the essence as object, nor existence as realization is "consistent" by itself and without the other. *Ens*, therefore, appears as a synthesis-in-act and not as the foundation[66]. An ulterior step of metaphysical reflection is needed whereby the essence and existence are founded on Being (*l'Être*). At the beginning of such a reflection, this *Être* is not identified with God; such an understanding of the relationship between Being and God occurs only at the end of metaphysical reflection. In the middle stages of metaphysical reflection, we deal with *esse* in the sense of "act of being" and the "act of all acts".

Fabro first deals with the problem of how *esse* as act of all acts is discovered. Fabro begins by eliminating experience, demonstration and abstraction as possibilities:

[1] experience reaches the fact of existence;
[2] demonstration concerns the existence of God;
[3] abstraction grasps the essence of things[67].

Fabro argues that, according to St. Thomas, *esse* as the act of all acts is grasped by "reduction" or resolution, which is seen as a passage of act to act. In this resolution-passage, the Thomistic real distinction between

[66] C. FABRO, "Notes pour la fondation métaphysique de l'être", *TPM*, 291: "Dans l'*ens* il y a un contenu, le *quod* (*Was*), et il y a un acte ou fait existentiel (*Dass*). Mais ni l'un ni l'autre ne sont consistants de par soi, ni l'essence comme objet, et par davantage l'existence comme réalisation: l'*ens* quant à lui est une synthèse en acte, et par conséquent un résultat: il ne peut donc pas se présenter comme fondement".

[67] C. FABRO, "Notes pour la fondation métaphysique de l'être", *TPM*, 291-292: "Dès lors, l'essence et l'existence seront à leur tour fondées dans l'Être. Mais dans la réflexion, cet Être ne peut être d'abord Dieu – tout au plus le sera-t-il seulement à la fin. La conscience doit partir de son immédiate convergence à l'être du monde: mais qu'est alors cet acte d'être, qui est un au-delà de l'essence et de l'existence, et cependant n'est pas Dieu ? Il doit être, cet *esse*, l'acte de tout acte; mais comment le découvrons-nous ? Par expérience ou par démonstration ? Par expérience, nous connaissons le fait de l'existence (la nôtre et celle d'autrui); par démonstration, nous obtenons, par exemple, l'exigence de l'existence de Dieu; par réflexion ou abstraction, nous accédons aux essences des choses".

essentia and *esse* – and not the Scholastic distinction between *essentia* and *existential* – has a central role[68].

In a recent article, A. Contat comments on the passages we have just summarized and successfully integrates them with Fabro's earlier texts on the metaphysical passage of the mind from an initial notion of *esse* to the second "methodological-structural" notion of *esse* and to the third "intensive" notion of *esse*. Contat asks how is it that the intellect can come to the "notion" of a metaphysical principle – *esse ut actus* – which transcends the order of the essences and, therefore, does not seem to enter into the sphere of that which can be conceptualized. Contat's synthesis of Fabro's thought and response to the problem is highly illuminating and brings out the fact that there is a resolution into an act and correlative potency at every stage of the itinerary of the metaphysical passage:

> The solution to this problem depends on the specific epistemological status that Fabro assigns to the procedure by means of which one rises to intensive being as the ultimate foundation of *ens*. The cognitive procedures that Aquinas inherited from Aristotle are necessary, but not sufficient, in order to accede to such *esse ut actus*. By means of external experience and the judgment of existence, one touches the existent; thanks to abstraction, one objectifies the quiddity or essence; by means of demonstration, one affirms the existence of God: thus one successively comes to *ens commune*, to the categories, to the First Mover. This inventive itinerary should be accompanied, at every stage, by a corresponding "reduction" or "resolution", which makes the actuality proper to the epistemological level, on which one finds themselves, appear, and which evidences, by contrast, the potency correlative to such actuality. Therefore, we are dealing with an ontological analysis, whose proper characteristic is that of hierarchizing the instances which result from it. In this way, there is an initial *resolutio* of *ens* in the common notion of *esse commune* (a), complementary to the thing which has it; then one undertakes a methodological *resolutio* of *ens*, within its quadripartite division, in the Aristotelian couplet of οὖσια and ἐνέργεια, interpreted by Fabro as the couplet of *quidditas* and *esse in actu* (b); and finally, one comes to the ultimate metaphysical *resolutio* of *ens* in the

[68] C. FABRO, "Notes pour la fondation métaphysique de l'être", *TPM*, 292: "D'après saint Thomas, l'*esse* comme *actus omnium actuum* est saisi, semble-t-il, non proprement par abstraction, ce qui vaut pour les essences, mais par 'réduction' ou résolution, ce qui est un passage d'acte à acte. D'où la centralité en thomisme de la distinction réelle d'essence et *esse* qui constitue le point de référence de la présente étude, comme la distinction entre *essentia* et *existentia* de la scolastique décadente s'est imposée à la problématique la plus profonde de la *Kehre* heideggérienne tant contestée".

> twofold opposition between *Esse subsistens* and *esse inhaerens*, the latter of which is *esse ut actus* limited by *essentia*, i.e., intensive being (c). In this way, the intellect undertakes "a passage from act to act", thanks to which one achieves, each time, something real, moreover something most real, which surpasses the order of the form, and is not, then, the object of a quidditative concept, but rather the object of a "notion" which contemplates a perfection achieved by means of a judgment[69].

Towards the end of his article, Fabro attempts a clarification of his thought on the ultimate metaphysical *resolutio* of *ens* in the opposition between *Ipsum Esse subsistens* and *esse inhaerens*[70].

In his article, Fabro is quite frank and states that it is not easy to show the process of this "resolution". Without explicitly referring to the work, Fabro recalls the results of his *Percezione e pensiero* on the initial manifestation of the real to our consciousness and the two "moments" of *content* (essence) and *act* (existence). The problem of foundation of the real is different from that of its perception, since we come to the foundation of the *content* (essence), moving – by means of reflection – from the characteristics of a being (a tree, for example), which are obtained through experience, to the "common type" of this being (the universal essence of "tree")[71]. In the foundation of act, act as such, does not require an ulterior foundation, but only if it is truly act. Existence, however, which is experienced, is not simply an act; it is rather a "fact" which presents the

[69] A. CONTAT, "Le figure della differenza ontologica…", 119-120.

[70] See *De Potentia*, q. 1, a. 1: "Ponimus ergo in Deo substantiam et esse, sed substantiam ratione subsistentiae non ratione substandi; esse vero ratione simplicitatis et complementi, non ratione inhaerentiae, qua alteri inhaeret". *Ibid.*, q. 7, a. 2 ad 7: "Modus significandi in dictionibus quae a nobis rebus imponuntur sequitur modum intelligendi; dictiones enim significant intellectuum conceptiones, ut dicitur in principio periher.. Intellectus autem noster hoc modo intelligit esse quo modo invenitur in rebus inferioribus a quibus scientiam capit, in quibus esse non est subsistens, sed inhaerens. Ratio autem invenit quod aliquod esse subsistens sit: et ideo licet hoc quod dicunt esse, significetur per modum concreationis, tamen intellectus attribuens esse Deo transcendit modum significandi, attribuens Deo id quod significatur, non autem modum significandi". *In Boethii De Hebdomadibus*, lect. 2: "Id autem erit solum vere simplex, quod non participat esse, non quidem inhaerens, sed subsistens".

[71] See C. FABRO, "Notes pour la fondation métaphysique de l'être", *TPM*, 292: "Comme fondement du *contenu* de l'essence (…cet arbre), les caractères de l'expérience même suffisent pour remonter (par la *réflexion*) au type commun d'arbre, qui est l'essence universelle".

essence as it is. Existence is a *posterius* with respect to the essence and depends on the essence. In metaphysical resolution, the essence-in-act is seen to depend on an act which is superior to the essence, prior to it and distinct from it. This is because the essence is not in act insofar as it is essence as the cycle of generation and corruption and finiteness in general make clear[72]. At the end of this resolution, *esse* as *actus essendi* is and is recognized as the proper fundament of the real as a principle and as act. In consequence, existence as "fact" is something that requires a foundation; *esse* as "act" is the founding act.

After a lengthy section on Heidegger and Hegel, Fabro picks up the thread of this argument and endeavors to determine the precise nature of what he has referred to as the "process of resolution". His argument is highly synthetic and deals with a number of themes: the presence of God in things, causal dependence, the distinction between Scholastic *existentia* and Thomistic *esse*, the role of the demonstration of God's existence and the stages of this resolution of *esse*. The main point Fabro wants to make is that the extrinsic nature of Scholastic *existentia* and the argument based solely on the causal dependence of the creature's *esse* is not conducive to a proper determination of *ens qua ens*. Fabro's proposal hinges on the determination of the *intrinsic* nature of the creature's participated *actus essendi* and the *causal* presence of God (*per essentiam*) in creatures. Let us look at this proposal more closely.

St. Thomas, Fabro begins, recognizes the dualistic structure of the real in couplets such as finite-Infinite, matter-form, essence-*esse*, subject-object, and creature-Creator. It is also true that St. Thomas places causal dependence at the crowning summit of the metaphysical edifice – conceiving the creature as finite and imperfect and the Creator as infinite and perfect. Fabro argues, however, that the originary determination of the

[72] See C. FABRO, "Notes pour la fondation métaphysique de l'être", *TPM*, 292-293: "Comme fondement de l'*acte* d'existence – absolument parlant, l'acte comme tel est affirmation originaire, position qui pose – , il n'exige donc pas un fondement ultérieur dans son ordre, si vraiment il est acte. Cependant l'existence comme telle ne peut être dite acte tout court, elle est un simple fait ; elle nous donne l'essence présente telle quelle et non autrement : l'existence est donc un *posterius* par rapport à l'essence et dépend de l'essence. Mais l'essence en acte – voici la résolution – doit dépendre aussi et surtout d'un acte supérieur à l'essence, distinct d'elle ; car l'essence, quand elle se présente, n'est pas en acte en tant qu'essence, bien qu'en fait elle soit une essence en acte. La naissance et la mort pour les choses corruptibles, la finitude pour tout genre de réalité qui n'est pas Dieu, l'attestent suffisamment".

fundamental *Diremtion*, of *ens* as synthesis-opposition of *essentia* and *esse*, precedes and, in its own way, founds the causal resolution[73]. To explain this, Fabro contrasts the extrinsicism characteristic of Scholastic *existentia* with the immanence-transcendence of Thomistic *esse*. In *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 8, a. 1-3, Aquinas founds the creature's existence on God's causal action, yet, at the same time, this divine causality of *esse* also produces the "essential belonging" of the creature to the Creator: God, as the cause of *esse* – which, in turn, is that which is most intimate and profound in each thing and the formal element or the act of all that is in things – is "present" in everything in an intimate way. In light of this, Fabro concludes that: "It is *esse* that dominates the causal foundation, and not the inverse"[74]. At the same time, God's presence *per essentiam* refers to a transcendental immanence in things, to an essential presence and total transcendence[75].

In the Thomistic conception, the distinction between *essentia* and *esse* founds the constitutive metaphysical moments both with respect to God (identity) and to the creature (real distinction); and, therefore, it constitutes the nexus of the fundamental *Diremtion* of "beings with respect to *esse*". Here, one no longer refers *esse* to *ens*, but resolves *ens* into its *esse*: the creature = participated *esse*; God = *esse per essentiam*[76]. Still, Fabro notes,

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[73] See C. FABRO, "Notes pour la fondation métaphysique de l'être", *TPM*, 309: "Il est certes vrai, précisons-le tout de suite, que saint Thomas lui aussi reconnaît la structure dualiste du réel dans les couples de fini e Infini, matière et forme, *essence* et *esse*, sujet et objet, créature et Créateur. Il est vrai qu'il pose comme couronnement de l'édifice métaphysique la dépendance causale, et par le fait même conçoit le fini et l'imparfait comme créature et l'Infini très parfait comme Créateur ; mais la détermination originaire de la *Diremtion* fondamentale de *ens* comme synthèse-opposition d'*essentia* et *esse* tient par elle-même et précède, fonde même à sa manière, la résolution causale".

[74] C. FABRO, "Notes pour la fondation métaphysique de l'être", *TPM*, 310.

[75] See C. FABRO, "Notes pour la fondation métaphysique de l'être", *TPM*, 311: "La formule dit en effet que Dieu est en toutes choses… *per essentiam, praesentiam et potentiam*, et le '*per essentiam*' se réfère – précise le saint Docteur – à l'essence divine immanente, car celle-ci est plus présente aux choses que les choses ne le sont à elles-mêmes, en tant qu'elle est la cause de leur *esse*, de leurs facultés et de leur agir (art. 3 ad 1). Il est clair dès lors que cette immanence transcendantale dans les choses – présence essentielle et transcendance total à la fois – est propre à Dieu (art. 4)".

[76] See C. FABRO, "Notes pour la fondation métaphysique de l'être", *TPM*, 311: "Il n'en va pas ainsi au contraire dans la conception thomiste authentique, où cette distinction fonde le moment métaphysique constitutif tant par rapport à Dieu

not everything is clear: one could object that while *esse* is certainly first act, it is so only insofar as it is conceived as a "relation" and is founded on causal dependence. To respond to this objection, Fabro says that we should consider the "quality" of *esse* in the primacy (*primitivité*) of the relation of thought to being: *Esse* is not conceived as a "relation" by St. Thomas, but as an act and supreme perfection. Our discovery of *esse* as act, he argues, is not linear, but concentric: "The itinerary of this discovery and foundation of *esse* is not linear, *more geometrico*, but quasi-concentric, by successive deepened study of the first and constitutive perception which is given by thought as such"[77]. In this way, Fabro ties in the theme of *ens* as the first apprehension of the intellect, i.e., metaphysical reflection is not merely a journey from one thing to another, but rather a continual, yet progressive return to *ens*, which was grasped in the beginning[78]. Fabro outlines his argument in three points:

1) Initial apprehension of *esse* within the apprehension of *ens*: The implicit, yet founding perception of *esse* takes place in the originary apprehension of *ens*: "*Illud quod primo intellectus concipit quasi notissimum et in quod omnes conceptiones resolvit est ens*"[79]. The *notissimum* is *ens*, as composed in act (*id quod habet esse*) of essence (real and concrete) and *esse* (the interior act)[80].

2) Explicit, indirect apprehension of *esse* as act: Then, there is a kind of grasping of *esse* as act, which one could say is explicit, yet, at the same time, indirect and obtained from this first apprehension. The mind is presented with the reality of the world in act; there is a grasping of this "being before oneself" which can be called the indirect apprehension of *esse* as act, since that which qualifies the real as "presence" in act is the act of the content, and not the content as such (the essence). This explicit, indirect

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(identité) que par rapport à la créature, et constitue donc le nœud de la *Diremtion* fondamentale 'de l'étant par rapport à l'*esse*' : qu'on le remarque bien, ici on ne rapporte plus l'*esse* à l'*ens*, mais on résout l'*ens* dans l'*esse* respectif (*esse* participé = créature ; *esse per essentiam* = Dieu)".

[77] C. FABRO, "Notes pour la fondation métaphysique de l'être", *TPM*, 312.

[78] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 238-239.

[79] *De Veritate*, q. 1, a. 1.

[80] See C. FABRO, "Notes pour la fondation métaphysique de l'être", *TPM*, 312.

seizure which illuminates, the founding function, which, according to St. Thomas, pertains to the notion of *ens* with respect to the first principles[81].

3) Comprehension of the metaphysical relationship of *esse* to *ens*: There is, in the end, the determination and the reflexive comprehension of the metaphysical relationship of *esse* to *ens* and of the constitutive meaning of the real distinction between essence and *esse*. This demands a subsequent reduction to fundament (*Esse per essentiam*) that is accomplished, in Thomism, by means of the convergence of the Aristotelian notion of act, and by the decisive intervention of the metaphysics of participation. The foundation of this third moment – which is the comprehension of *esse* in *ens* as participation – begins with the demonstration of God as first Cause, yet still presupposes the first two meanings (ontic transcendence and fundamental ontological constitutive). Through reduction along the lines of causal relation, one passes to the metaphysical transcendence of the affirmation of God which is founded on the dependence of *ens per participationem* is with regard to *Esse per essentiam*[82].

The Thomistic noetic and semantic plexus of *ens* (that-which-is) refers to both content and act. *Ens* implies *esse* and *esse* is the act of *ens* as a whole, and therefore, taken in its extreme concreteness and guaranteed by the emergence out from nothing. In the givenness of external and interior experience, which manifests this emergence, there is transcendence: a) *Immediateness as presentation of experience*: There is an immediate transcendence in the experience of the world: it is a phenomenological-ontic transcendence that constitutes the sphere of *notissimum* of which St. Thomas speaks as first actuation of the spirit. b) *Immediateness as expansion of the primordial presentation of ens*: There is an immediate transcendence in the expansion of this primordial experience of *ens* evidenced by the principle of contradiction. c) *Mediateness as conclusion*: There is a mediate transcendence seen in conclusion of the demonstrative process of the existence of God, which by means of reflection, there is a process of a "passage to the limit" in the examination of *Esse ipsum*: *Esse* as Act without content[83].

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[81] See C. FABRO, "Notes pour la fondation métaphysique de l'être", *TPM*, 312-313.

[82] See C. FABRO, "Notes pour la fondation métaphysique de l'être", *TPM*, 313.

[83] See C. FABRO, "Notes pour la fondation métaphysique de l'être", *TPM*, 314.

The last step – the mediate conclusion in a demonstration – is not completely arbitrary. The apprehension of *ens* is absolutely primordial, anterior to any duality or opposition. In itself, it is emergent and foundational: "that is why the path that goes from the beings [*étants*] to *esse* is that of a *reductio ad principium* and a resolution to fundament, and not properly of a demonstration in the proper sense of the term"[84]. In the Thomistic demonstration of the existence of God – which is the supreme affirmation of the transcendental transcendence of *esse* – one should not speak of a "leap", since already in the predicamental transcendence of the presence of the world, thought has a direct experience of *esse*. It is not a "leap", therefore, but rather a passage from initial *ens-esse* to intensive *esse* as act of itself (*de soi*) and in itself (without essence or form)[85]. In contrast to the Scholastic-Suarezian definition of existence and its *extra causas* characteristic, Thomistic *esse* is an immanent, constitutive principle. Thus, Fabro writes, the relation of the creature to the Creator as dependence of *esse* is not of an "expulsive nature" (characteristic of the Scholastic notion of *existentia*), but of a "containing nature"[86]. We are dealing with an absolutely original position with respect to *esse*: there is an overturning of the speculative axis of form and essence in favor of the act of being.

In his conclusion to the article, Fabro affirms that "Thomistic metaphysics also begins with *ens*, but turns quickly to *esse* and bases itself on *esse* as transcendental act, and its explanation is an essential turning toward *esse* as towards the point of departure which is made the means by which it shows itself at the end as real-ideal terminus, in the ascending dialectic of participation"[87].

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One of the novelties in this article is the attention given to the role of the demonstration of the existence of God and the latter stages of metaphysical resolution. This involves the determination of the

[84] C. FABRO, "Notes pour la fondation métaphysique de l'être", *TPM*, 314.

[85] See C. FABRO, "Notes pour la fondation métaphysique de l'être", *TPM*, 314-315.

[86] See C. FABRO, "Notes pour la fondation métaphysique de l'être", *TPM*, 315: "En thomisme, au contraire, l'*esse* est constitutif immanent, et ainsi le rapport de la créature au Créateur comme dépendance dans l'*esse* n'est pas de nature expulsive, mais contentive au suprême degré".

[87] C. FABRO, "Notes pour la fondation métaphysique de l'être", *TPM*, 316.

metaphysical relationship between *esse* and *ens* by means of a resolution of *ens* into *esse*, determining the creature (*ens*) as that which has participated *esse* and God (*Primum Ens*) as *Ipsum Esse Subsistens*. In Thomistic thought, this resolution or reduction to fundament is accomplished by the convergence of Aristotelian act and the metaphysics of participation. This reduction and comprehension of *esse* within *ens* as participation entails the demonstration of God as First Cause, yet should not be characterized as a demonstration, nor reduce the creature's *esse* to its "extrinsic" relationship of causal dependence on the Creator. The immanence of transcendental, participated act of *esse* must be maintained. At the same time, one should privilege what Fabro daring calls the "transcendental, immanence" of God's presence *per essentiam* in creatures.

Fabro contrasts the Scholastic reduction of *esse* to *existentia* and relation, emphasizing its extrinsic role and the Thomistic conception of *esse* as act and supreme perfection. St. Thomas comes to his discovery of *esse* by means of a quasi-concentric reflection on *ens*. In the apprehension of *ens*, the composition of essence and *esse* is implicitly contained. The determination of the metaphysical relationship of *esse* to *ens*, entails a reduction to fundament and convergence of act and participation. Participated *esse* is founded on *Esse per essentiam*. This moment of comprehending *esse* in *ens* as participated, initially involves the demonstration of God's existence and as First Cause. The reflection, however, is not exhausted in this demonstration or in the affirmation of an extrinsic, causal relation of dependence. Metaphysical reflection proceeds from beings to *esse* according to a *reductio ad principium* and resolution to fundament. This metaphysical reflection is not characterized as a Hegelian "leap" from beings to being, but rather as a passage, since *esse* is present from the beginning in the originary apprehension of *ens*. This reaffirms the Thomistic conception of the constitutive immanence of participated *esse* and avoids the dangers inherent in the Scholastic reduction of *esse* to *existentia* and the realm of extrinsic causality.

1.4 The transcendentality of *ens-esse* (1966)

In 1966, Fabro published an article in English entitled: "The Transcendentality of *Ens-Esse* and the Ground of Metaphysics"[88]. The article takes up the problem of being in Kant, Hegel and Heidegger and

[88] C. FABRO, "The Transcendentality of *Ens-Esse* and the Ground of Metaphysics", *International Philosophical Quarterly* 6 (1966), 389-427.

concludes with Fabro's interpretation of Aquinas's texts on *ens* as the *primum cognitum* of our intellect and as the foundation of the transcendentals. Like the article we have just considered, references to *resolutio-reductio* as the method of metaphysics are very frequent.

After analyzing Kant's position on being and bringing to light the deficiencies of Kant's position in sections one and two of the article, Fabro draws attention in section three to the importance of determining the first moment or beginning of theoretical reflection. Aquinas, he argues, has made the authentic, radical beginning and fulfills the requirements that modern thought has brought to the fore concerning the requirements and radicality of the beginning itself. In brief, these requirements are:

[1] The beginning should be without presuppositions and be made within the original act that is the founding act of every apprehension of the real.
[2] The progress of thought should be projected as a passage from the implicit to the explicit which becomes more articulate by degrees.
[3] Consequently, everything is already given in some manner in the beginning insofar as it is presented as the "fundament" (*Grund*) of everything that is presented as real and determinate.
[4] The beginning is discovered through philosophical reflection in such a way that it is recognized as a starting point, and in such a way that it constitutes the criterion for the foundation and constitutive "return" in which consciousness recognizes its "transcendental structure" [89].

Put more simply, Fabro is setting the parameters within which one may establish *ens* as *primum cognitum* of the intellect, the development of knowledge as an "explicitation" of what is already implicit in *ens* and the method of resolution as the philosophical reflection by which one both recognizes *ens* as the starting point and foundation and understands the initial development of the intellect. This initial development of the intellect concerns the first notions, some of which are determined to be the transcendental properties of *ens qua ens* – hence Fabro's article makes reference to the "transcendental structure" of consciousness. With this preamble, Fabro concludes that the problem of the apprehension of *ens* is key to understanding the originality of St. Thomas's position. This

[89] C. FABRO, "The Transcendentality of *Ens-Esse*…", 402-403. Fabro's lists five requirements; I have combined the first two into one.

apprehension is undoubtedly unique in that, as Fabro writes, "*ens* is not simply *essentia* or *esse*; rather it is the selfgivenness in act of their synthesis"[90].

One of the inspirations for St. Thomas's original position on our initial apprehension of *ens* is Avicenna, as recalled by the "principal text" on the problem, *De Veritate*, q. 1, a. 1[91]:

> As in demonstrable things it is necessary to make a reduction to some principles which are *per se nota* to the intellect, so also in investigating what something is; otherwise one falls into an infinite regress, and thus all science and knowledge of things will perish. Now, as Avicenna says in the beginning of his *Metaphysics*, that which the intellect first conceives *quasi notissimum*, and to which it reduces all its conceptions, is *ens*. Consequently, all the other conceptions of the intellect are had by additions to *ens*. But nothing can be added to being as though it were something *quasi* foreign to *ens* – in the way that a difference is added to a genus or an accident to a subject – for every nature is essentially an *ens*[92].

Fabro comments on the text, drawing attention to the method of reduction-resolution and the process of *additio*.

1) *Reductio*: With regard to method, Fabro points out that the text refers to *reductio*, which is the proper method of metaphysics. In this case, *reductio* does not refer to analysis, synthesis or a merely logical process of clarification of explicative resolution. Instead, *reductio* indicates the "return to fundament", namely, a process of intensive and comprehensive

[90] C. FABRO, "The Transcendentality of *Ens-Esse*…", 404.

[91] C. FABRO, "The Transcendentality of *Ens-Esse*…", 407: "In the principal text of the Thomistic doctrine we can distinguish three moments: the appearing of *ens*, the all-comprehensive actuating of itself, and it intentional expansion both in the univocal predicamental sphere and in the properly analogous transcendental sphere. The procedure is extremely rigorous and perhaps constitutes the most dense and formal text in the whole history of Western thought".

[92] *De Veritate*, q. 1, a. 1: "Dicendum, quod sicut in demonstrabilibus oportet fieri *reductionem* in aliqua principia per se intellectui nota, ita investigando quid est unumquodque; alias utrobique in infinitum iretur, et sic periret omnino scientia et cognitio rerum. Illud autem quod primo intellectus concipit quasi notissimum, et in quod conceptiones omnes *resolvit*, est ens, *ut Avicenna dicit* in principio suae metaphysicae. Unde oportet quod omnes aliae conceptiones intellectus accipiantur ex *additione* ad ens. Sed enti non possunt addi aliqua quasi extranea per modum quo differentia additur generi, vel accidens subiecto, quia quaelibet natura est essentialiter ens".

foundation[93]. The contrast Fabro makes between a merely "logical resolution" and a true "metaphysical reduction" is noteworthy.

2) *Additio*: This process of intension-comprehension starts with the notion of *ens* and is expressed by St. Thomas with the term *additio*. The process, he notes, is proper to metaphysics and contains two opposed processes of analysis and synthesis: there is an interior "dividing up" of *ens* (analysis) and re-composition (synthesis) within the original comprehensive unity of *ens*[94]. In other words, our intellect progresses by "going out" from *ens* (intentional expansion) and subsequently "returning" to *ens* (*in quod omnes conceptions resolvit*). The intentional expansion or *additio* of *ens* can happen in two directions: one predicamental; the other transcendental[95]. The predicamental direction of expansion is concerned more with phenomenological-ontic knowledge and the mode of having determinate being; it concerns the essence and the proper mode of structuring *res*. It deals with the realm of "content" and of *res*, more than *ens*. In it, there is a principal and founding content which is substance and a secondary, derived and founded content which are the accidents[96]. In the "following out" of the predicaments, there is a kind of impoverishment of *ens*; in the transcendental direction and articulation of the transcendentals, there is an ascent towards the summit of perfection. Fabro explains this in four points:

[1] Because *ens* expresses the first actuation of *esse*, *res* and the other transcendentals, inasmuch as they follow upon *ens*, are in "some manner" already contained in *ens*.
[2] The transcendentals do not add anything to "expand" *ens*, they make explicit what is implicit in *ens*.

[93] C. FABRO, "The Transcendentality of *Ens-Esse*…", 407-408: "First of all, the method proper to metaphysics is affirmed. It is neither analysis nor synthesis but *reductio*: "*Sicut in demonstrabilibus oportet fieri reductionem in aliqua principia per se intellectui nota, ita investigando quid est unumquodque; alias utrobique in infinitum iretur, et sic periret omnino scientia et cognitio rerum*". The term *reductio* appears to be proper to St. Thomas and does not indicate so much a merely logical process of clarification of explicative resolution (*resolvit*) as rather the "return to fundament" and therefore a process of intensive and comprehensive foundation that the rationalistic tradition in the West has completely forgotten".

[94] See C. FABRO, "The Transcendentality of *Ens-Esse*…", 408.

[95] See C. FABRO, "The Transcendentality of *Ens-Esse*…", 409.

[96] See C. FABRO, "The Transcendentality of *Ens-Esse*…", 409.

[3] In the determination of *res* as content of *ens*, there is a clear announcement of the real distinction of act (*esse*) and content (*essentia*), i.e., between the act of being and the subject of being.

[4] *Ens* refers to *esse*, and does not mean "that which has *ordinem ad esse*": "In *ens* are included *essentia* and *esse*, content and act, and essence expresses *esse* as formality (*humanitas Petri*), but the *esse* that is signified in the participial form of *ens* is *esse* as the act of every form and essence"[97].

Section Four of the article, "The transcendentality of being", also contains references to resolution-reduction as the method of metaphysics. The first concerns the resolution of first principles to *ens* as a movement of convergence and constitutive reflection on the foundation:

> Just as the movement of irradiation *ens* becomes explicitated, that is, expands into the most disparate forms of knowledge in their principles and by means of them into the various methods and conclusions that are proper to the different sciences and kinds of knowledge, so, too, in the movement of convergence, that is, of constitutive reflection on the foundation, the spirit, which is openness to all by its nature, carries back the manifold principles to first principles, in order to resolve at last the first principles themselves into the primordial presence of *ens*[98].

Further on, Fabro characterizes this resolution of principles back to *ens* as a theoretical demand and an "essential step" of thought, by which thought itself is brought "back to the 'constitutive beginning' by means of the apprehension of *ens*"[99]. *Ens*, therefore, is the synolon or resolutive plexus of the double dialectic of thought as relationship of consciousness to being and as relationship of essence to act of being[100]. The essential interconnectedness between being and consciousness – which Fabro calls

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[97] See C. FABRO, "The Transcendentality of *Ens-Esse*…", 412:

[98] C. FABRO, "The Transcendentality of *Ens-Esse*…", 415. See I, q. 94, a. 2: "Primum principium indemonstrabile est quod non est simul affirmare et negare, quod fundatur supra rationem entis et non entis, et super hoc principio omnia alia fundantur".

[99] C. FABRO, "The Transcendentality of *Ens-Esse*…", 415.

[100] Fabro's reference the double dialectic is explained further on. In light of Heidegger's objections, Fabro argues for an essential and mutual interconnectedness of the being-in-act of *ens* with the being-in-act of consciousness and of consciousness with *ens*.

the "reduction to the ground" – opens up the perspective for radical grounding of metaphysics in *ens-esse*. Fabro then shows how Thomistic *ens* satisfies the methodological and theoretical demands of modern and contemporary thought (Kant, Hegel and Heidegger)[101].

1) Against Kant, the Thomistic apprehension of *ens* is seen as an original, infinite openness of the mind. Kant was correct that knowing is fundamentally synthetic, yet the *a* priori synthesis of Kant remains "an extrinsic function on all levels, whether of intuition (space, time), or of the understanding (categories) or of reason (Ideas), because the two principles of the synthesis, precisely because they are designated as matter and form, stand and must remain outside of and impenetrable to each other, and it is the role of the act of consciousness to join them (one does not know how)"[102]. For St. Thomas *ens* as *primum cognitum* is not only the *primum psychologicum*, but much more importantly, concerns the constitutive priority of *ens* within the entire sphere of consciousness. St. Thomas insists on *ens* as the bearer of *esse* and raises it to an "absolute positing"[103]. In the Thomistic synthesis of *essentia* and *esse* in *ens*, there is a nexus (synthesis) of act to act and not of matter and form (Kant). In this way, there can be a self-giving between consciousness and *ens*, which is an intrinsic and constitutive corresponding (and not an extrinsic Kantian function): "the being-in-act of consciousness as presence in act is founded on *ens*, or the being-in-act of *ens*, and is present in virtue of the presentation (in act) of the real"[104].

2) Against Hegel, the original synthesis of *essentia-esse* in *ens* is the transcendental synthetic act of the spirit. When St. Thomas "affirms that *ens* is the *punctum resolutionis* of knowing in all its fullness, he, and not Hegel, adequately fulfills the demand of the 'beginning'"[105]. Hegel's *Sein* reveals itself as nothingness due to its immanentistic positing; Thomistic *ens* is the authentic transcendental immediate, and virtually contains the means which by itself proceeds to mediation. *Ens* means *id quod habet esse*, so that when there is *esse*, everything is given in its ultimate concreteness of reality (and is not an empty, abstract Hegelian *Sein*). The apprehension of *ens* is the fundamental noetic principle and is truly a transcendental *synolum* and

[101] See C. FABRO, "The Transcendentality of *Ens-Esse*…", 416-420.

[102] C. FABRO, "The Transcendentality of *Ens-Esse*…", 417.

[103] I assume Fabro is referring to *De Veritate*, q. 21, a. 1: "Omnis enim positio absoluta aliquid in rerum natura existens significat".

[104] C. FABRO, "The Transcendentality of *Ens-Esse*…", 417.

[105] C. FABRO, "The Transcendentality of *Ens-Esse*…", 417.

plexus of essence and *esse*. "The error of Hegel, and subsequently of Heidegger, is in having posited as a beginning a pure *Sein*, that is, an empty act, and an emptiness such that it must vanish into nothingness"[106].

3) Against Heidegger, Fabro holds that the original presence of *ens* is the fundamental actuation of the spirit. Heidegger's being as "presence of the present" corresponds to the Hegelian *Sein* of the first immediacy (*reines Sein*): "it is the *reines Sein* that stands in itself (that is, as simple and univocal consciousness), without dialectic because it has been received as simple presence of consciousness, as pure *cogito*, and is therefore stripped radically of every reference to the Absolute"[107]. In contrast, the Thomistic apprehension of *ens* includes a dialectic (*essentia* and *esse*) and a reference to the Absolute (*esse participatum* to *Esse per essentiam*). As well, in the Thomistic apprehension of ens, there is a "simultaneous attestation of the being-in-act of the real, and of the being-in-act of consciousness, and of the being-in-act of the mutual relationship of the real to consciousness and of consciousness to the real"[108]. In other words, in the relationship of consciousness to *ens*, it is by means of the *esse* of *ens* that *ens* makes itself present to consciousness and it is consciousness that is actuated as the presence of *ens*. Modern thought proposes an interconnectedness of phenomenon to consciousness by means of the act of consciousness and leads to the renunciation of truth and a radical historicity. Thomism begins with *ens* (and its transcendental tension of act and content), recognizes the constitutive interconnectedness of content (essence) to act (*esse*), and due to this tension grounds consciousness in being and not being in consciousness.

4) In Thomism *ens* is the transcendental of transcendentals. For example, St. Thomas's texts found *verum* and *bonum* on *esse*, as well as *vivere* and *intelligere* on *esse*. To answer and satisfy the legitimate demands of modern thought, the speculative act must be constituted by itself without any reference beyond itself that is not the deepening of the act in itself. Fabro calls this deepening a "resolution to ground". This resolution involves the movement in metaphysics from the predicamental order – and emergence of substantial and accidental *esse* – to the ontological metaphysical order of the pure perfections (life, wisdom, etc...). It is within this transcendental order that *ens* emerges over all the other transcendentals and *esse* over every act and perfection:

[106] C. FABRO, "The Transcendentality of *Ens-Esse*…", 418.
[107] C. FABRO, "The Transcendentality of *Ens-Esse*…", 419.
[108] C. FABRO, "The Transcendentality of *Ens-Esse*…", 419.

> In this "resolution to the ground" one must always insist on act and on the requirement of an act that stands in itself and does not wane, and this is only *esse*, unlike essence, which sinks into the predicaments and belongs to the noetic sphere of the possible. We have thus an ascending of act to act by perfective degrees from the predicamental to the transcendental. In the predicamental order there is the emerging of substantial and accidental *esse*: "Since *ens* properly signifies something being in act (*esse in actu*), and act properly correlates to potency; in consequence, something is simply called *ens*, accordingly as it is primarily distinguished from that which is only in potentiality. And this is precisely each thing's substantial being. Hence by its substantial being, everything is called *ens* simply; but by any further actuality that is added it is said to be relatively (*esse secundum quid*)"[109]. In the ontological metaphysical order there is the emergence of the pure perfections, such as life, wisdom and, in general, the activity of the spirit, over the material perfections, inasmuch as the former by their belonging to the sphere of the spirit participate more fully in *esse*: "Therefore, if these [life *per se*, wisdom *per se*] which are the principles of the others, are not unless by participation in *esse*, to a greater degree, those that participate in them, are not unless by participation in *esse ipsum*"[110].

In the transcendental order there are two moments: 1) The emergence of *ens* over the other transcendentals as their principle and ground, owing to *esse*, which is the act of every act and the perfection of every perfection. In this reduction to ground, the operative principle is the emergence of act[111], i.e., *esse* effectuates the transcending of act to act; 2) *Esse* is not only the ground for the derivation of the transcendentals, but also the *terminus* of the return of their dialectic. From this perspective one can outline a "metaphysics of act" which, "taking from modern philosophy the requirement of radicality or absolute emergence of the theoretical act, traces it back to the apprehension

[109] I, q. 5, a. 1 ad 1: "Nam cum ens dicat aliquid proprie esse in actu; actus autem proprie ordinem habeat ad potentiam; secundum hoc simpliciter aliquid dicitur ens, secundum quod primo discernitur ab eo quod est in potentia tantum. Hoc autem est esse substantiale rei uniuscuiusque; unde per suum esse substantiale dicitur unumquodque ens simpliciter. Per actus autem superadditos, dicitur aliquid esse secundum quid".

[110] C. FABRO, "The Transcendentality of *Ens-Esse*…", 422. See *In V De Divinis Nominibus*, lect. 1, n. 639: "Ergo si ista [per se vita, per se sapientia] quae sunt principia aliorum, non sunt nisi per participationem essendi, multo magis ea quae participant ipsis, non sunt nisi per participationem ipsius esse".

[111] See C. FABRO, "The Transcendentality of *Ens-Esse*…", 422.

of *ens* as the all-embracing act of the presentation of the real to the mind and the mind to itself"[112].

Fabro explains this procedure of "tracing" the emergence of act to the apprehension of *ens* in the last section of the article, entitled: "Radicality of philosophical procedure concerning being". In this regard, Fabro makes two clarifications: 1) a clarification concerning the origin of the notion of *ens*; 2) the second concerning the *locus intentionalis* of *esse* or *actus essendi*, i.e., the phase or function of the mind that grasps reality insofar as it is in act.

1) With regard to the origin of the notion of *ens*, Fabro notes how St. Thomas often affirms that *ens* is the *primum cognitum*, but almost says nothing on *how* the human mind grasps such a notion[113]. Some of St. Thomas's youthful texts seem to indicate that the *ratio entis* arises in the mind through an abstractive process. This, Fabro argues, is insufficient for "authentic Thomism". Fabro's argument is based on two fundamental characteristics of the notion of *ens.* 1) First, the notion of *ens* is the noetic ground of the first principles. Thus, if abstraction presupposes the *notio entis* and is founded on the knowledge of the first principles, "then the original apprehension of the *notio entis*, which precedes everything and is presupposed in everything, cannot be merely the effect of abstraction in the ordinary sense"[114]. 2) Secondly, the notion of *ens* embraces two "elements": essence (content) and *esse* (*actus essendi*). Because it includes both, "the origin of the *notio entis* can in no wise be referred to the process which abstracts only essence"[115].

> Aristotle had recognized that being is not a genus, but only because of its extremely indeterminate content which finds its proper determination in the categories. For St. Thomas, if we understand him correctly, *ens* escapes every logical classification because, thanks to *esse*, it indicates the exercise in act of reality, that is, being in act, which is for the mind the starting point and constitutes the fundamental act of its operation. […] Insofar as the *notio entis* properly includes *esse* as its distinguishing characteristic, it rivets and connects consciousness of necessity to reality in act, from which, for this reason, the mind cannot abstract. […] Just as the *notio entis* is a synthesis of content and act, so also it is a certain ineffable form of "conjoint apprehension" of content on the part of mind and of act on the part of experience: not, be it noted well, on the part of any sort of experience, that is, not the mere fact of existence, but

[112] C. FABRO, "The Transcendentality of *Ens-Esse*…", 423.
[113] See C. FABRO, "The Transcendentality of *Ens-Esse*…", 423.
[114] C. FABRO, "The Transcendentality of *Ens-Esse*…", 424.
[115] C. FABRO, "The Transcendentality of *Ens-Esse*…", 424.

> the experience of the simultaneous awareness of the being-in-act of the world in relation to consciousness and of the actuation of consciousness in its turning to the world[116].

The above texts evidence two things about Fabro's view on the apprehension of *esse*: first, that the initial apprehension of *esse* which is properly included in the initial apprehension of *ens* is different from the knowledge of *esse* achieved at the end of metaphysical reflection; second, that the term "reduction to fundament" or "resolution to ground" can refer to either the return to *ens* as the foundation of the transcendentals or to the ascension of thought through the predicamental order to the transcendental one, where *esse* emerges as the act of all acts or perfection of all perfections.

2) With regard to the *locus intentionalis* of *esse*, Fabro adamantly affirms that the grasping of reality insofar as it is in act, "stands poles apart from abstraction and cannot be an object of abstracting reflection properly so-called, but only of direct and immediate apprehension"[117]. Thomists who attempt to resolve the question of the initial apprehension of *ens* as a grasping of essence in an apprehension and a grasping of *esse* in judgment invoke texts which Fabro argues does not deal with the question at hand[118]. Such texts deal with the function of two operations of the intellect which divide the two-fold content of the notion of *ens*, essence and *actus essendi*. The notion of *ens* precedes both *res* and *verum* in the grounding of the transcendentals[119].

In his conclusion, Fabro expresses his hope that Thomistic metaphysics will no longer have its center in a treatise on substance and the categories, but instead in one concerning the transcendentals (*ens, res, unum, aliquid, verum, bonum, pulchrum*). Such a theory of transcendentality can be discovered in the profound and authentic Thomistic notion of participation. It also means that Thomism be intensified around the tension in *ens* of *quod est* (*essentia*) and *esse* (*actus essendi*). These observations, he notes, await further development.

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[116] C. FABRO, "The Transcendentality of *Ens-Esse*…", 424-425.

[117] C. FABRO, "The Transcendentality of *Ens-Esse*…", 425.

[118] *In I Sent*., d. 19, q. 5, a. 1 ad 7; *In I Sent*., d. 37, q. 1, a. 3; *In Boethii De Trinitate*, q. 5, a. 3.

[119] I assume that by referring to *res*, Fabro refers to essence and the role of abstraction; by referring to *verum*, Fabro refers to *esse* and the role of "*est*" in a judgment.

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Fabro's article clearly affirms reduction-resolution as the proper method of Thomistic metaphysics (cf. *De Veritate*, q. 1, a. 1). Fabro's article highlights the role of resolution in the foundation of all concepts and the other transcendentals on *ens* as *primum cognitum*. The priority of *ens* in the intellect is due to *esse*, which is its act. The intellect's development starting from *ens* is seen as making explicit what is implicit in *ens*. It is by means of reflection that one recognizes *ens* as the starting point of the intellect. Metaphysical reflection itself is seen as a continual return to *ens*. This implies a *reductio* to fundament, which Fabro describes as a process of intensive and comprehensive foundation and makes reference to processes of *additio*, analysis, and synthesis. The intentional expansion of *ens* happens in two directions: predicamental and transcendental.

The expansive movement into knowledge and science is complemented by the movement of convergence, bringing the plurality of principles to their foundation on the first principles and resolving the first principles into *ens*. The apprehension of *ens* is the fundamental noetic principle and is truly a transcendental *synolum* and plexus of essence and *esse*. The Thomistic apprehension of *ens* includes a dialectic (*essentia* and *esse*) and a reference to the Absolute (*esse participatum* to *Esse per essentiam*). The ultimate, foundational act must be truly foundational and not have a reference beyond itself. Fabro calls this a "resolution to ground" and involves a movement of thought from the predicamental order (accidental and substantial acts) to the metaphysical order of the pure perfections and *esse*: *Esse* emerges over all other acts and perfections. In this reduction to ground, the operative principle is the emergence of act, i.e., *esse* effectuates the transcending of act to act.

This emergence of act can be traced to the initial apprehension of *ens*. The heart of Fabro's solution to the problem of how *ens* comes to be our first concept regards the distinction he makes between *esse in actu* or (existence) which is grasped by a judgment of perception and *esse ut actus* which is arrived to at the end of metaphysical reflection. Fabro also distinguishes between the confused *ens* as *primum cognitum* and the notion of *ens* at the end of a process of resolution. This is paralleled by a distinction between the confused *esse* present as act within the initial concept of *ens* and the determination of *esse ut actus* achieved at the end of metaphysical reflection.

1.5 The existence of God and the tension of *ens-essentia-esse* (1967)

In Fabro's *L'uomo e il rischio di Dio* (1967), we find a section entitled "The existence of God in the tension of *ens-essentia-esse*"[120]. Here Fabro argues that Kant's approach to the problem of God's existence was doomed to failure since Kant remained within the Scholastic and rationalistic tension of essence-existence, instead of the Thomistic tension of essence-*esse*. In such a perspective, existence (being-in-act) is merely a fact; Parmenidean εἶναι and Thomistic *esse* as constitutive principle are forgotten. This affords Fabro the opportunity to reflect once again on the originality of St. Thomas's view of the initial apprehension of *ens* and the ultimate determination of *esse ut actus*.

Fabro touches on some themes we saw in the previous article regarding how we initially apprehend *esse* in *ens*. Calling it an "implicit apprehension" is good, but not enough, as it is the apprehension of *ens* necessarily implies and depends on a mutual apprehension of *esse*:

> The apprehension of *esse* in *ens* is not something abstract and derived, but rather, concrete and primary: not, however, in its fullness and purity, since then we would have the direct apprehension or intuition of God who is the *Esse ipsum*, [...]. According to St. Thomas we apprehend *ens* and not properly *esse*: in *ens* thought *esse* is included as its act and just as to apprehend *ambulans* we should apprehend *ambulare*, so also apprehending *ens* [...] we should apprehend *esse*. Do we apprehend the *esse* that is implicit in *ens*, like *ambulare* in *ambulans*? In my opinion, to say that it is implicit is to say too little here: as I can apprehend (perceive) *ambulans* insofar as I perceive its *ambulare*, so I perceive *ens*, perceiving *esse*.

With this premise, Fabro begins his explanation of the importance of our initial apprehension of *ens* and divides it into five points.

1) In the first point, Fabro affirms that *ens* is the *primum cognitum* (the first object of knowledge) and the first transcendental (the founding beginning that illuminates all other knowledge). He recalls the *De Veritate* text (q. 1, a. 1) and the roles of *resolutio* and *additio* in contrast to Scholastic *abstractio*. That all other concepts of the intellect are received by additions to *ens* does not refer to an extrinsic, formal determination of *ens*, but rather to a process of making explicit what is implicit.

2) *Ens* is the *primum cognitum* insofar as it is knowable and also the *primum cognitum faciens conoscere*. In the formalistic tradition, the first

[120] C. FABRO, *L'uomo e il rischio di Dio*, 363-372.

principles are given pride of place while the foundation of intelligibility seems to be actuated at the level of abstraction or, in the Augustinian tradition, the principles are *rationes seminales*. St. Thomas – Fabro argues – was attracted to the Augustinian conception in his youth, presenting the first principles as *quasi*-innate.

> Such terminology and a doctrine disappears in maturity: for St. Thomas as well, the first speculative and practical principles are the ultimate foundation of knowledge (reflexive) but these are not, however, the first (and ultimate) foundation of knowledge. The radical foundation or the *transcendental primum*, on which the first principles have to be founded, is the immediate apprehension of *ens*, which is absolutely first under all aspects and absolutely founding for all levels of knowledge[121].

The apprehension of *ens* is the foundation of the first principles: "Thanks to the function of foundation of *ens-esse*, *ens* is presented as the first notion, *esse* as the first act, the principle of contradiction as the first principle and God as *Esse ipsum*, as the First Principle and the First Cause"[122].

3) The primordial nature and foundational transcendentality of *ens* stems from the priority that belongs to *esse*: *Esse*, Fabro writes, transcendentally emerges over all other acts insofar as it is their foundation and actuates all other acts. God as *Esse ipsum* is the *real* foundation of the first act of every *ens*. The apprehension of *ens* is the primary noetical foundation of all knowledge and, therefore, of our knowledge of God. Unlike our immediate knowledge of the existence of material things, our knowledge of God is mediated: "God is *Esse ipsum*, he cannot be said *ens* in the proper sense: since God is pure Act, therefore, absolutely unlimited and for us indeterminate, while *ens* is always something determinate"[123].

4) It is the presence of *esse* attested to by *ens* which brings one to the existence and nature of God. Here, Fabro returns to the complicated theme of the relationship between *ens* and the being-in-act of consciousness (which we looked at in the previous two articles). Fabro does a much better job of connecting the theme to the priority of *esse* over essence:

> The presentation of *ens* is the unveiling and placing-in-act of consciousness, and this is the principle of consciousness itself: the act of *ens* that places consciousness in act is not, and cannot be, the essence which is a content and

[121] C. FABRO, *L'uomo e il rischio di Dio*, 367.
[122] C. FABRO, *L'uomo e il rischio di Dio*, 367.
[123] C. FABRO, *L'uomo e il rischio di Dio*, 368.

> therefore has need of being actuated and illuminated, i.e., being made present. Essence is founded on *esse* and not vice versa, insofar as every essence is a possibility, a modality, or rather participation of being, namely, it is a certain determinate content to be actuated by *esse*. I understand that these [...]. The apprehension of concepts in every field, the formulation of judgments and activity of reasoning and demonstration in every intentional sphere... necessarily come to a head in that first sparkle in consciousness of *esse* as act of *ens*[124].

For us, the intelligibility of *ens* is founded in the intrinsic synthesis of essence and *esse*. God, who is *Esse ipsum* and not an *ens*, is not present due to such a synthesis" of *esse* and *essentia*.

5) From these reflections, Fabro notes, it does not yet follow that *Esse ipsum* exists: i.e., "the affirmation of the existence of *Esse ipsum* who is God, does not yet become certain and absolute for us men, who are linked to the world of phenomena"[125]. Here, the *a posteriori* moment – that of a causal demonstration – comes into play. In this case, cause refers to the "principle of foundation", to the radical production of being, and not merely the empirical production of spatial-temporal processes of nature. Due to the nature of our intelligence, only that which is finite and contingent – *ens per participationem* – is present to us *per se*. It is immediately given in experience. Yet this *ens per participationem*, which has finite, limited *esse*, has a transcendental reference to *Esse per essentiam* as Foundation and Principle[126]. In this dialectic of reference or foundation of *ens* on *esse*, I know from experience that *ens* exists; to know *ens per participationem* in experience means to attest to it and attesting an experience in space and time. But space and time are not the foundation, nor the founding principles: space and time are also in need of a foundation. Fabro continues this point in a more complicated, yet well-crafted paragraph on the passage from *ens* to the foundation of participated *esse*:

> The foundation of every presence of *ens* is *esse* and the foundation of the apprehension of every *ens* and of every aspect of *ens* is the apprehension of *esse* in *ens*. Now if I reduce being (*esse*) to the simple "presentation of the present" (Heidegger) in space and in time, *esse* is no longer the foundation but is function of space and time even when it is conceived of as other by consciousness, namely, it is the actuating of consciousness itself if it is identified with consciousness and this brings one to resolve the foundation of

[124] C. FABRO, *L'uomo e il rischio di Dio*, 368-369.
[125] C. FABRO, *L'uomo e il rischio di Dio*, 369.
[126] See C. FABRO, *L'uomo e il rischio di Dio*, 369.

being in nothingness according to the inevitable coherence of the principle of immanence. But if *esse* is recognized as the foundation, it transcends essence and the limits of space and time and demands the right of [being] the principle of every principle and of the act of every act. But *esse* as present in experience and as found in *entia* is always found in forms that are finite, limited... by the essence itself: it is an *esse* of a certain thing and in a certain sense, and by transcendental metaphysical consideration it is an unauthentic and improper *esse*, it is a actuating *esse* which is not properly founding but is also founded, it is an *esse per participationem*. Now, *esse per participationem* refers to the *Esse per essentiam*, to *Esse ipsum*, as to its principle and foundation: with respect to the actuated essence *esse per participationem* is an actuating act, but in itself *esse* which is limited, finite (and such is every *esse* that is the act of some essence) is conditioned by the essence in which it is received and is founded on the *Esse per essentiam* which is infinite *in se* and unlimited, which is *esse* alone and fully *esse*. And this *Esse per essentiam* is God, thus the reference to this *Esse per essentiam* is the ultimate proof of the existence of God: it does not start from the concept of God and from *Esse per essentiam* and does not move within an empty formal tautology, but from the existence of the fact of *ens* which has *in se* the act of *esse per participationem* and which thus refers directly to *Esse per essentiam*. That the reality of experience is *ens*, is something I know from its attesting to consciousness and from the dependence in act of consciousness itself which proves in it the presence *a se* of the world and the presence of itself to the world. That it is *ens per participationem* is something I know from its contingency, finiteness, precariousness… with the continual danger of the end and death. That *ens per participationem* refers to *Esse per essentiam* as to its First Principle is obvious and necessary not only as *ambulans* which refers to the act of *ambulare*, but above all as to the first act of every act and of *ambulare* and *loqui* and *vivere* and *amare*. It is because of this – that *esse* is transcendental act and thus immanent by participation to every act and to every form in act – that *Esse* demands being *per essentiam*, i.e., being in act by itself and being alone and completely and always act and this *Esse* is God. Therefore, *if* there is *ens*, there should be *Esse* (*per essentiam*); yet experience attests the experience of *ens* to me at every step and every moment… therefore God exists: the existence of *ens per participationem* demands the reference to *Esse per essentiam* as to its fundament *in esse*[127].

The next paragraph explores the givenness and presence of *ens* mentioned above, first with respect to the knowing subject and then with respect to the object of knowing. With respect to the knowing *subject*, the mind is in act due to presentation of *ens* in act; this presupposes that the

[127] C. FABRO, *L'uomo e il rischio di Dio*, 370-371.

knowing subject is initially in act in the sphere of being and not in the sphere of knowing. With respect to the *object* of knowing, the *esse* of *ens* is the object of knowing, yet not as the content (essence), but rather as the presentating of the content and, thus, like the containing act of the content[128]. Fabro continues:

> And together, precisely because of the founding transcendentality of being with respect to knowing, the act of being (*esse*) is revealed founding not only with respect to the object (essence) but likewise with respect to the subject (I, consciousness, spirit…), which can be actuated in knowing which is having the being of (intentional) presence to the degree it is constituted already as a having the being of (real) possession. Consciousness grasps the being in act of *ens* and grasps its own being in act to the degree it grasps the being of its own act of knowing: none of these [three] *esse* are yet the *esse*, which is the profound trans-phenomenal act, but all three conspire toward it and the mind aspires to found it in metaphysical reflection or reduction[129].

In contrast to Hegel's proposal of beginning with an initial, empty *Sein*, St. Thomas begins with the apprehension of *ens* as constitutive plexus of *essentia* and *esse*. By means of this plexus, reflection, "proceeds to the determination of the fundament such that 'the first plexus becomes the first constitutive nexus' from which one illuminates the difference of the *ens* which is *esse* as act from the essence and imposes the affirmation of the emergence of *esse* over essence as first and ultimate act"[130]. In the Thomistic conception, we see that in the originary receptivity of the being of *ens*, the mind experiences its own "radical actuation as the unlimited and free openness to every possible presence"[131]. Fabro concludes the chapter by referring to the metaphysical reflection which brings us to God as *Esse subsistens* and *Bonum subsistens*[132].

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[128] See C. FABRO, *L'uomo e il rischio di Dio*, 371.

[129] C. FABRO, *L'uomo e il rischio di Dio*, 371.

[130] C. FABRO, *L'uomo e il rischio di Dio*, 372.

[131] C. FABRO, *L'uomo e il rischio di Dio*, 372. Fabro's footnote: "This is no longer possible in Kant and in the various perspectives inspired by him, which are linked to the (finite) structure) of space and time and should thus conceive being as intrinsically finite (See M. Heidegger, *Kants These über Sein*, 1962). Also in classical metaphysics (Platonism, Aristotelianism) which founds knowledge on the intelligibility of form and essence, being is the actuation of the form and the essence – namely, the form and essence in act – is intrinsically finite".

[132] C. FABRO, *L'uomo e il rischio di Dio*, 372: "This originary givenness of *ens* is not something that is dispersed like Hegelian *Sein* which is swept away, with

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We do not find novelties in this text, but rather a continuation of themes we have seen earlier: the role of the apprehension of *ens* as *primum cognitum*, a reference to *resolutio* as method, and metaphysical reflection as moving towards the foundation of *ens* in participated *esse* and later to *Esse subsistens*. The explanation of the relationship between consciousness and *ens* and of the foundation of participated *esse* are noteworthy.

1.6 Thomistic *esse* and the return to metaphysics (1967)

Fabro's article, "*L'esse tomistico e la ripresa della metafisica*", was originally an inaugural lecture he gave at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas on March 10, 1967[133]. With regard to the method and structure of metaphysical reflection, his lecture touches on some points that we have already seen, such as the importance of the apprehension *ens* as *primum cognitum* and the difference between Thomistic *esse* and Scholastic *existentia*. The article argues that *ens* is the "first plexus" and expresses the "first nexus"; it reaffirms that the method of metaphysical reflection is *reductio-resolutio* and delves into some more technical questions regarding the ultimate determination of *esse*.

The article is divided into four untitled sections. Sections One and Two deal with some of the metaphysical problems proper to modern and contemporary thought: their principle of immanence and the consequences of the Scholastic distinction between *existentia* and *essentia*. Section Three deals with the apprehension of *ens*; Section Four with the Thomistic reduction to *esse*, which "alone can satisfy the radical demand of absolute

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the mediation of nothingness, into becoming: the presentation of the notional plexus of *ens* is constitutive for subjectivity as spirit whose advance is delineated as a return to fundament, namely, from *ens* to *esse*, which finds its objectivation and adequate foundation in the affirmation of God. Thus, precisely because consciousness is totally receptive before *ens* (before the *esse* of *ens*), it can advance in the foundation of the *esse* of *ens* and can discover the infinite subject of truth since it can transcend itself in the first act of the essence, in the emergence of *esse*. It can transcend itself in knowing and discovering *Esse subsistens*, which is God, it can transcend itself in the desiring, longing for, and loving and discover the *Bonum subsistens* which is the essential love of divine perfection and beauty".

[133] C. FABRO, "L'*esse* tomistico e la ripresa della metafisica", *Angelicum* 44 (1967), 281-313.

foundation of thought and this according to the demand proper of modern philosophy, that of the 'transcendental', yet in an opposite direction"[134].

Throughout the article Fabro stresses the importance of the synthetic nature of the initial apprehension of *ens*[135]. Thomistic *ens* avoids the danger of "being resolved into the plexus of content as essence or abstract objectivity (Scholastic formalism) and into the plexus of containing as consciousness or abstract subjectivity (modern immanentism)[136]. Fabro argues that the first – the formalistic objectivism of Scholasticism – to the second. With the denial of the primary and founding plexus of *ens* the primary constitutive nexus of *essentia-esse* is also denied. Here we see the emergence of: "the absolutely original and incomparably actual character of the conception of the Thomistic dialectic of *ens-essentia-esse* in contraposition to the amorphic and static plexus of *ens-essentia-existentia* of the formalistic tradition"[137]. Heidegger, Fabro notes, stresses the modal distinction of *essentia-existentia* as responsible for the *Vergessenheit des Seins* of modern thought.

In the third section of the article, Fabro deals with the initial apprehension of *ens* and the presence of *ens* to the mind. He writes that *ens*

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[134] C. FABRO, "L'*esse* tomistico e la ripresa della metafisica", 282.

[135] C. FABRO, "L'*esse* tomistico e la ripresa della metafisica", 282-283: "While in modern thought the synthetic function of thought is always postulated and never founded, in the Thomistic conception, according to which *ens* is the *id quod primo intellectus intelligit*, such syntheticity is originary and constitutive for real thought, which analyticity is reserved to formal thought, namely, to the knowledge of contents of the essence: thus, in the first Thomistic plexus of *ens* as *id quod est, quod habet esse*, the constitutive relation of thought is presented, in the twofold and dialectical movement of the relation of consciousness to being and of being to consciousness. Together, and by comparison, in the originary plexus of *ens*, as *id quod habet esse*, the constitutive form to express the real is presented, which is accessible to consciousness, in the duplicity of subject and act or of form and content, which is announced already directly – even though implicitly, but firmly – in *ens* as synthesis or real composition of *essentia* and *esse* as *actus essendi*. Thus, it is that in Thomistic thought, unlike the formalism or essentialism of Scholasticism and of the *conscienzialismo* or humanism (or anthropocentrism if you prefer!) of modern thought, one should say that the 'first plexus' (of *ens – id quod habet esse*) is in agreement with and is theoretically explicated *in se* by the 'first nexus' (*essentia – esse, actus essendi*) in that which with Hegel one call the constitutive *Diremption* or syntheticity of thought".

[136] C. FABRO, "L'*esse* tomistico e la ripresa della metafisica", 283.

[137] C. FABRO, "L'*esse* tomistico e la ripresa della metafisica", 291-292.

may be called: "the most intense or intensive plexus and, at the same time, the most universal and constitutive nexus for the intentionality of the real or of passing in act of consciousness"[138]. Fabro gathers his reflections into two points: *ens* is a *primum fundans* for knowledge; *ens* is the first plexus (content and act) and first nexus (essence and *esse*).

1) For St. Thomas, the apprehension of *ens* is presented as the *primum fundamentum fundans* for knowledge. This is not merely a *primum* in the psychological order, but also a *primum* in the order of absolute foundation: "*Primo in conceptione cadit ens, quia secundum hoc unumquodque cognoscibile est in quantum est actu*"[139]. *Ens* is also the "specificative transcendental" for the mind: "*Illud quod primo acquiritur ab intellectu est ens et id in quo no invenitur ratio entis, non est capibile ab intellectu*"[140]. The *primum* of knowledge is "the *trascendentale fundans*, which is *ens* that precedes both the concrete and the abstract and contains them both"[141].

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[138] C. FABRO, "L'*esse* tomistico e la ripresa della metafisica", 295. Fabro continues: "In fact, *ens* is the most concrete semantic-term insofar as it indicates the real concrete "in act" of being and the concrete is in act not in any way, but according to the ultimate determination of concreteness which is that of having *esse*: *ens* as that which has being, that which is plexus of essence and of act of being as *actus* or *virtus essendi*. This point, which is the beginning of Parmenides according to the principle that 'without being there is no thought', was sent back to the shadow with the emergence given by Plato and by Aristotle to the "form" or to the act resolved into form and essence was made, therefore, the fundament of being (*forma dat esse*). The Thomistic revolution was in the promotion, of Neo-platonic inspiration, of *esse* from founded to founding and, therefore, in the radical overcoming of Platonic-Aristotelian formalism; the Thomistic position is presented, then, emergent by the contrast of Plato-Aristotle, as the only original, valid re-taking of the Parmenidean instance, it is the authentic "step backward" (*Schritt zurück*) of Heidegger which permits a valid retaking up of metaphysics. For that to happen it is necessary that the first plexus of *ens* express, at the same time, the first nexus, or fundamental demand of knowing and the fundamental structure of being" (295-296).

[139] I, q. 5, a. 2.

[140] *In Librum De Causis*, lect. 6.

[141] C. FABRO, "L'*esse* tomistico e la ripresa della metafisica", 296-297. Further on Fabro returns to the theme of *ens* including both content and act: "In fact, Thomistic *ens* expresses the first, integral re-taking up of the Parmenidean instance of truth – as daring as it may seem – from within of the tension-opposition of the transcendence of Platonic form as of the concreteness of Aristotelian act. […] In fact, *ens* reveals and satisfies the demand of the principle as beginning and of principle as fundament: it is the absolutely indeterminate in the formal line of

2) *Ens* as first plexus expresses the first nexus. Fabro explains what he means by contrasting the Scholastic and Thomistic approach to knowledge of reality. Scholasticism which conceives valid knowledge in terms of the pure abstraction of the universal and the foundation of such abstraction of the essence places the primordial evidence of the first principles of identity and non-contradiction. In Thomism, one does not stop the *reductio* or *resolutio in fundamentum* at the abstract, first principles, but proceeds further and founds such principles on *ens*. The evidence of the predicative plexus of subject and predicate is founded on the fundament of the plexus of act and subject in the form of *ens*: "*Ens*, in fact, which is the fundament of all significability […] *il notissimum* and *in quod intellectus omnes conceptions resolvit*, is, at the same time, and consequently, the sustenance and the point of double derivation: on the one hand, of the transcendentals, and on the other, of the first principles, or of the two constitutive moments of the fundamental theoretical act"[142]. With respect to the transcendentals, I-II, q. 55, a. 1 ad 1 states that: "*Id quod cadit in intellectu est ens*. *Unde unicuique apprehenso a nobis attribuimus quod sit ens, et per consequens quod sit unum et bonum, quae convertuntur cum ente*". With respect to the first principles, St. Thomas expresses this in a synthetic way: "That which, before all else, falls under apprehension, is *ens*, the notion of which is included in all things whatsoever a man apprehends. Wherefore the first indemonstrable principle is that 'the same thing cannot be affirmed and denied at the same time', which is based on the notion of *ens* and *non ens*: and on this principle all others are based"[143]. And also in an analytical way:

> Now for the purpose of making this evident it must be noted that, since the intellect has two operations, one by which it knows quiddities, which is called

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content, since it does not indicate any particular content of essence – as *id quod habet esse*, can be anything, from a microbe and the infinitely small particle of matter to the supreme dignity and reality of the spirit. But *ens* is also completely determined as regards act: in fact, it means the exercise in act of the act of being (*esse*) which is the act of all acts and the perfection of all perfections. Thus, by the fact that *habet esse*, *ens* has in act all that which *esse* actuates, that is, everything, namely, presupposes in act (in *ens*) all its determinations of the substantial form up to the ultimate qualities and actualities of the real existent" (299).

[142] C. FABRO, "L'*esse* tomistico e la ripresa della metafisica", 300.

[143] I-II, q. 94, a. 2: "Est ens, [id] cuius intellectus includitur in omnibus quaecumque quis apprehendit. Et ideo primum principium indemonstrabile est quod non est simul affirmare et negare, quod fundatur supra rationem entis et non entis, et super hoc principio omnia alia fundantur".

> the understanding of indivisibles, and another by which it combines and separates, there is something first in both operations. In the first operation the first thing that the intellect conceives is being, and in this operation nothing else can be conceived unless being is understood. And because this principle – it is impossible for a thing both to be and not be at the same time – depends on the understanding of being (just as the principle, every whole is greater than one of its parts, depends on the understanding of whole and part), then this principle is by nature also the first in the second operation of the intellect, i.e., in the act of combining and separating. And no one can understand anything by this intellectual operation unless this principle is understood. For just as a whole and its parts are understood only by understanding being, in a similar way the principle that every whole is greater than one of its parts is understood only if the firmest principle is understood[144].

In a footnote, Fabro lists those neo-Thomists who see a continuation of the Kantian *a priori* synthesis and hold that judgment in the *locus* for the foundation and extraction of *esse* as *actus entis*: J. Maréchal, E. Coreth, H. Krings, J.-B. Lotz, M. Müller, L. Oeing-Hanhoff, K. Rahner, G. Siewerth and B. Welte. Fabro notes that J.-B. Metz argues that the position of Maréchal is opposed to that of Gilson, who also favors the role of judgment in grasping *esse*[145].

In light of this, Fabro stresses that since the intelligibility of the first principle is founded on the manifestation of *ens*, the explicit synthesis of judgment (*verum*) should express the implicit synthesis of *ens* according to analogy. He concludes that: "saying that it is *ens* that bears (founds) truth is realism, while affirming that it is judgment to found the presence of being,

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[144] *In IV Metaph.*, lect. 6, n. 605: "Ad huius autem evidentiam sciendum est, quod, cum duplex sit operatio intellectus: una, qua cognoscit quod quid est, quae vocatur indivisibilium intelligentia: alia, qua componit et dividit: in utroque est aliquod primum: in prima quidem operatione est aliquod primum, quod cadit in conceptione intellectus, scilicet hoc quod dico ens; nec aliquid hac operatione potest mente concipi, nisi intelligatur ens. Et quia hoc principium, impossibile est esse et non esse simul, dependet ex intellectu entis, sicut hoc principium, omne totum est maius sua parte, ex intellectu totius et partis: ideo hoc etiam principium est naturaliter primum in secunda operatione intellectus, scilicet componentis et dividentis. Nec aliquis potest secundum hanc operationem intellectus aliquid intelligere, nisi hoc principio intellecto. Sicut enim totum et partes non intelliguntur nisi intellecto ente, ita nec hoc principium omne totum est maius sua parte, nisi intellecto praedicto principio firmissimo".

[145] See C. FABRO, "L'*esse* tomistico e la ripresa della metafisica", 301.

is to attribute to being the belonging to consciousness as foundation"[146]. Judgment is founded and not founding. To understand this, Fabro argues that is helpful to turn to Heidegger's interpretation of the history of philosophy and look at the status of "being" in classical and medieval thought, inevitably correcting Heidegger's interpretation with regard to St. Thomas.

Classical thought, Fabro argues, projects Being in the reality of the world and thought becomes a "representing" of the world. "Thus, essence functions as 'fundament' since it constitutes *logos*, the One of (and in) the many, the Universal of (and in) the particulars, the Permanent of (and in) the changing, the Identical of (and in) the diverse…"[147]. In this classical conception, the essence is manifested by means of thought, which "gathers" and signifies (*legein*) the One and the many; existence, on the other hand, is attested to in the first instance of experience and by reference to experience. Thus, Aristotle makes a distinction between the question "*an sit*" and "*quid sit*" as that between two distinct fields of knowledge. "Existence" is attested to by the senses; essence is attested to by intellectual reflection (abstraction). In this gnoseological dualism, Being as such, is meaningless by itself and refers to essence (the passage from possibility to reality)[148].

Medieval thought, Fabro writes, welcomes this distinction and separation between essence and existence, yet delves deeper. Both essence and existence are "founded" insofar as the world is created by God. "Thus, essence is referred, as to its fundament, to the divine essence, which is the archetype of every reality and perfection; existence, on the other hand, has for its fundament, the creative, divine will, namely, the free decision of God to make the essence 'pass' from possibility to reality"[149]. Here, Being as such is once again meaningless, since it is always the realization of the essence. At the same time, there is a vast difference between the being of Greek thought, which refers to the world, and the being of medieval thought, which refers to God.

In this generalization of medieval thought, Heidegger seems to ignore Thomistic *Esse*, which is antithetical to Scholastic *existentia*. *Existentia* was referred to and founded *only* on the causality of divine freedom – which by

[146] C. FABRO, "L'*esse* tomistico e la ripresa della metafisica", 302.
[147] C. FABRO, "L'*esse* tomistico e la ripresa della metafisica", 303.
[148] See C. FABRO, "L'*esse* tomistico e la ripresa della metafisica", 303.
[149] C. FABRO, "L'*esse* tomistico e la ripresa della metafisica", 304.

definition is inaccessible in its fundament to the finite intellect[150]. This explains three facts:

[1] first, that the extrinsicism of formalistic Scholasticism is in part responsible for modern thought with respect to dominance of existence and subjectivity;
[2] second, the fall of modern *cogito* into human *volo*;
[3] thirdly, the point of departure and fundament of thought is a logical-ontic principle which is at the foundation of both everything that can be known and of every possibility in any order. This is called the *principle of contradiction*. The principle regards the convenience or non-convenience of *P* and *S* in a judgment (and later the consequence or non-consequence of M and m and the conclusion): but the relation of *S* and *P* is a relation of essence (possible or real). Therefore, entrusting "the fate of thought to the reflexive fundament of the abstract principle of contradiction is responsible for the deviation of essence-existence and the forgetfulness of Being"[151].

In this way, Scholasticism makes the truth of Being depends on the truth of the essence: this means that thought proceeds exclusively by synthesis and analysis, by affirmation and negation. St. Thomas's position is different:

> For St. Thomas, on the contrary, the principle of contradiction is certainly founding with respect to all the other principles of the arts and sciences and all the derived forms and special forms of knowledge, but only insofar as it is founded on *ens* – namely, insofar as it is not the absolute *prius* in its progressive constituting of the life of the spirit, but is in some way a *posterius* with respect to the first constitutive plexus of *ens*. St. Thomas does not speak certainly in this way, but his language leaves no room for doubt: as all the principles of the arts and sciences refer to some first principles common to all and to all (principle of identity, of third exclusion…), thus these principles refer to that which is the first principle of all, the principle of contradiction. But the principle of contradiction cannot communicate intelligibility to all the life of the spirit, however it moves, insofar as it is founded (*dependet*) on the "presence of the present" which is *ens*, insofar as it resolves (*resolvitur*) in the apprehension of *ens*. Here essentialism is weakened at the source and it is very

[150] C. FABRO, "L'*esse* tomistico e la ripresa della metafisica", 304.
[151] C. FABRO, "L'*esse* tomistico e la ripresa della metafisica", 305.

> surprising that Heidegger hasn't noticed, perhaps even he has been betrayed by the Suarezian-Wolffian tradition of rationalism and German enlightenment[152].

Section Four of the article begins with some methodological indications. Fabro argues that the metaphysical process of foundation is not properly made initially through a demonstration, but rather by an initial reduction of act to act and, then, by a second foundation of participated *esse* on *Esse per essentiam* which involves a demonstration:

> With the ultimate reduction or "step backward" to "*esse ipsum*" as act of all acts, thought has made the return to the fundament asked for by Heidegger, as to its primary foundation. The process of this foundation is not by demonstration in the proper sense, but by reduction or by the passage of act to act: moving from the accidental actuations to the substantial formal act and ultimately to *actus essendi* as the act of all acts. Here the spirit then moves to the second foundation which is that from the participated *actus essendi* to *Esse per essentiam* and this ultimate foundation comes by demonstration: however it is a demonstration that has a synthetic character since it corresponds, by elevation, to the plexus of the notion of *ens* on which it is founded and cannot be analytic. The knowledge of the real is and must be, for a finite intellect like ours – synthetic – in spite of the attempts of Hegel and Heidegger. The reality of the finite is attested to in the plexus of *ens* and is not resolved in the appearing of Being; thus, the reality of the Infinite which is *Esse subsistens* is required by the nexus of the foundation of the plexus of *ens*, namely in the real tension-dialectic of *essentia-actus essendi* which brings one from *ens per participationem* to *Esse per essentiam*[153].

The distinction between a first foundation and reduction of accidental and substantial formal acts to *actus essendi* and a second foundation of participated *actus essendi* to *Esse per essentiam* is key to understanding the overall structure of Fabro's metaphysical reflection. In the text, Fabro specifies that the second foundation involves a demonstration (the existence of God), yet is not limited to such a demonstration.

Essential Thomism, Fabro writes, needs to be rooted in the Parmenidean perspective of being as foundation and, at the same time, in the synthetic nature of the fundamental theoretical act – that of the apprehension of *ens*. In this synthetic apprehension we have the originary *Diremtion* of

[152] C. FABRO, "L'*esse* tomistico e la ripresa della metafisica", 305-306.
[153] C. FABRO, "L'*esse* tomistico e la ripresa della metafisica", 306.

essence and *esse*, which satisfies the demands of modern thought[154]. For St. Thomas, *esse* as *actus essendi* is the first act and the principle-fundament of every form, essence, perfection and reality in act[155]. While it is true that at times St. Thomas calls the essence "*esse*", this is not *esse* as *actus essendi*. Fabro argues that no Thomistic text confuses *esse* with the abstract *entitas*:

[1] "*Ipsum esse est actualitas omnium rerum*"[156]: This phrase can be taken to refer to *esse commune* in the sense that *esse* is the act of "every" *ens* and, thus, of every form and perfection. Thus, *esse commune* is the synonym of every *ens* and therefore of every *esse participatum* in general which is, in turn, the act of finite *ens* insofar as it is distinct from *Esse per essentiam*[157].

[2] *Esse* as *actus essendi* also refers to the singular, concrete act which is found in a real composition with the singular essence of a finite *ens*.

[3] God is *Ipsum Esse Subsistens* or *Esse per essentiam*. God is not a synolon of concrete and abstract, but rather is Pure Act, and, in the formal sense, cannot be called "*ens*". Therefore, in God, *ens* and *esse* coincide as do *essentia* and *esse*, such that we can say God is *Ipsum Esse Subsistens* and does not properly have an essence. God is the supreme perfection as Pure Act and not the simple Totality or sum of all perfections (essentialistic, Scholastic-Hegelian concept of God) [158].

To account for those texts in which St. Thomas refers to God as *primum ens* or *maxime ens*, Fabro introduces a methodological distinction between our "notion" of God *in via inventionis* and *in via iudicii*:

[154] See C. FABRO, "L'*esse* tomistico e la ripresa della metafisica", 308.

[155] C. FABRO, "L'*esse* tomistico e la ripresa della metafisica", 308-309: "*Esse* is the participated act of every reality in act, it is the transcendental participation *per excellence*: metaphysics, then, becomes for St. Thomas (beyond Plato and Aristotle) a metaphysics of the participation of *ens* in *esse*, forgotten by the Western tradition which has battled St. Thomas no less than Parmenides, and therefore, is actuated in ascension-passage (*Uebergang*) from *ens-esse per participationem* to *Esse per essentiam* (*Esse subsistens*)".

[156] I, q. 4, a. 1 ad 3.

[157] See C. FABRO, "L'*esse* tomistico e la ripresa della metafisica", 309-310.

[158] See C. FABRO, "L'*esse* tomistico e la ripresa della metafisica", 310.

> In fact, the *ontologische Differenz* – on which Heidegger justly insists – is missing in essentialism which resolves it in the opposition of concrete (*ens-existentia*) and abstract (*esse-essentia*), but is not missing in the Thomistic position which distinguished properly within *ens* and of every *ens inquantum ens*, namely, *ens per participationem*, even of the pure spirit (with the exception of God who is *Esse per essentiam*), *esse* and essence in the sense of two component principles of finite *ens* (distinguishing them as act and potency). God, in the strict sense, cannot be said to be *ens* since "…*ens dicitur id quod finite participat esse*" (*In Librum De Causis*, lect. 6): the expression "… est aliquod *primum ens*, quod Deum dicimus" (*Summa contra Gentiles*, I, ch. 14) or that that of "…*maxime ens*, et hoc dicimus Deum" (*Summa contra Gentiles*, I, ch. 13), namely as terminology "*in via inventionis*" which concedes the place "*in via resolutionis*" or "*via judicii*" to the proper determination of God as *Esse subsistens*. And St. Thomas proceeds in this with extreme precision, demonstrating that "Deus est sua essentia" (*Summa contra Gentiles*, I, ch. 21) since he does not have accidents or matter (see also I, q. 3, a. 3); since "*in Deo idem est esse et essentia*" (*Summa contra Gentiles*, I, ch. 22) in the very precise sense that essence in God is resolved into *esse*, i.e., that "*Deus non habet essentiam quae non sit suum esse*"[159].

Fabro reiterates that it is not created *esse* which is resolved into essence (fullness-totality of forms), but rather that God's essence is resolved into his *esse*:

> But rather the contrary, it is essence that is resolved into *esse*: "*Si ergo divina essentia est aliud quam suum esse, sequitur quod essentia et esse se habeant sicut potentia et actus*" – but since God is pure act (*Summa contra Gentiles*, I, ch. 16), and the "*primum ens*" – in the sense just explained and sense which is clear from the entire context which proclaims God as un-participated *esse* – one should admit that "…*Dei esse quidditas sua sit, Dei essentia est suum esse, ipsum divinum esse est sua essentia vel natura...*"[160].

Fabro speaks of the originality of the intensive concept of Thomistic *esse* as first, absolute, emergent act and how it differs from the formal, essential act of Scholasticism. St. Thomas's perspective of the distinction between essence and *esse* as principles of *ens* does not coincide with Heidegger's "ontological difference": *Sein-Seiende* which ends in ontic-phenomenological *Nichts*; rather, it is able to satisfy the demand for the

[159] See C. FABRO, "L'*esse* tomistico e la ripresa della metafisica", 311.
[160] See C. FABRO, "L'*esse* tomistico e la ripresa della metafisica", 311.

"resolution to fundament" (*esse* as first, metaphysical, absolutely emergent act)[161].

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The article continues in the line of thought Fabro develops throughout the decade of the 1960s: the importance of the synthetic nature of the initial apprehension of *ens*; metaphysical reflection as a resolution-reduction to fundament. Of utmost importance is Fabro's distinction between the first foundation of *ens* by means of a reduction of act to act (accidental and substantial formal acts to *actus essendi*) and a second foundation of participated *actus essendi* on *Esse per essentiam*. This second foundation involves a demonstration (of the existence of *Esse per essentiam*) but is not exhausted in the demonstration. Fabro holds that God is first seen as *Primum Ens* (*in via inventionis*) and subsequently as *Esse Subsistens* (*in via resolutionis* or *via iudicii*). One should see this "resolution" as one of essence into *esse*, rather than *esse* into essence.

1.7 Knowledge of *esse* (1967)

One of Fabro's most synthetic texts on the method of metaphysical reflection and the way we come to know *esse* is found in the entry he wrote for the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* on "Existence"[162]. The article affords Fabro the opportunity to emphasize the radical difference between *existentia* (as found in Greek, Scholastic and modern thought) and Thomistic *esse*. The first section of the entry is historical in nature and traces the concept of *existentia* from the Greeks to Heidegger. The second section is dedicated entirely to St. Thomas and *esse*. Fabro first deals with the Thomistic meaning of *esse* and then concludes the entry with two paragraphs on our knowledge of *esse*.

The first paragraph on our knowledge of *esse* is largely a *pars destruens*. Fabro argues that our act of judgment does not grasp *esse* in the sense of *actus essendi* and that the attribution of judgment to *esse* in some of St. Thomas's youthful texts refers more properly to phenomenological *esse* (*existentia* or *esse in actu*), ontological *esse* (formal *esse*: subsistence or accidental *esse*) or logical *esse* (*est*). Fabro also mentions his proposal of *resolutio* without specifying what it consists in:

[161] See C. FABRO, "L'*esse* tomistico e la ripresa della metafisica", 312.
[162] C. FABRO, "Existence", *The New Catholic Encyclopedia,* vol. V, 724.

> Knowledge of *esse*. Some modern authors hold that the Thomistic concept of *esse*, as an act of being in the strict sense, is seized by the mind in the act of judgment or in the synthesis of subject and predicate (F. Sladeckzek, K. Rahner, M. D. Roland-Gosselin, J. B. Lotz). They do this because they do not distinguish between *existentia* as an empirical datum (*essentia in actu*) and *esse* as a most intimate and profound constitutive principle: the first is accessible to experience and expresses itself in the judgment, whereas the second reveals itself only to the most advanced metaphysical reflection. *Existentia*, therefore, is affirmed either through a judgment of perception that attains the present singulars or through demonstration by means of a principle of causality or of similarity (*per signum*). Essence is known by abstracting the universal from particulars, based on an induction that is a function of the cognitive power influenced by the intellect and above all by the principle of contradiction; thus it expresses itself through definition and through judgment in the formal order of "nature considered in itself." The activity that unveils *esse* in Thomistic metaphysics has a unique character and could be called a *resolutio* that is proper to metaphysics. When St. Thomas attributes to simple apprehension the knowledge of material essences through abstraction and assigns the *ipsum esse rei* to the second act of the mind (*In Boeth. De Trin.* q. 5, a.5), he is speaking of an *esse* that pertains to the ontological, logical, and phenomenological orders, and not strictly of the *esse* that in God is His essence and in creatures is a substantial act distinct from essence and the effect of God Himself[163].

The preceding paragraph only very briefly mentions Fabro's solution, stating that *resolutio* is the activity which unveils *esse* in Thomistic metaphysics. In this case, *esse* means either the substantial, participated, caused act which distinct from essence in creatures or as God's essence.

Fabro's second paragraph fleshes out the dynamic of this *resolutio* and explains it as a type of "dialectical emergence":

> In Thomistic metaphysics, proceeding as it does from act to act, resolving the less perfect to the more perfect, the *Esse Ipsum* constitutes the final reference for every actuality. Its apprehension is neither intuitive nor abstract but rather a type of "dialectical emergence". Just as the apprehension of *ens* underlies the perception of reality, the apprehension of first principles, and the abstraction of essences, so the apprehension of *esse* as metaphysical act presupposes existential perception as much as intuition and abstraction, and is located at the apex of their convergences. It is obtained, for St. Thomas, by recourse to argumentation; this, however, is purely revelatory, bringing to light the

[163] C. FABRO, "Existence", 724.

> originality of *esse* or demonstrating the real distinction between *esse* and essence in creatures and their identity in God. It is a "dialectical" kind of knowledge to the extent that *esse* as such is act and not content; thus the apprehension of *esse* occurs "by emergence," whereby the concept of act is approached as a first principle and foundation, and so reveals the ultimate stage of agreement between intellect and reality[164].

Resolution is specified as a resolution of perfection and a resolution of act. The resolution of the less perfect into the more perfect calls to mind the "dialectical ascension" from the individual who participates in a species and genus to the perfections proper to such a genus. Such perfections are resolved into *ipsum esse* as the perfection of all perfections. The resolution of act to act refers to the path from accidental acts and forms to substantial act and form to *esse* as the act of all acts.

From a gnoseological point of view, Fabro argues that *esse* is *apprehended* by the intellect. He characterizes this apprehension as a kind of "dialectical emergence"[165]. The apprehension of *esse ut actus* presupposes: 1) the initial, synthetic apprehension of *ens*, 2) "existential perception" (the perception of a subject-in-*act*), 3) the grasping of the first principles and 4) the abstraction of the essences. Grasping *esse ut actus* requires a convergence of these activities insofar as *esse* is implicitly contained in the initial apprehension of *ens* as act, is the foundation of *esse-in-actu*, the foundation of the truth of judgment and the first principles and the actuating principle of the finite essence.

Because *esse* is act and not content (essence), it is not obtained by an abstraction, but rather through "dialectical" reasoning; hence, the reference to argumentation. This argumentation either brings to light the "originality of *esse*" (principle of the emergence of act; principle of separated perfection) or the difference between the participated *esse* of the creature and divine *esse* (principle of separated perfection; principle of participation). Lastly, "emergence" requires to the emergence of act over act (*esse* over form, *esse* over *ens*). Thus, the apprehension of *esse* is seen to involve argumentation, demonstration, resolution and reduction.

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[164] C. FABRO, "Existence", 724.

[165] The term "emergence" recalls his work in *Percezione e pensiero*, p. 287-292.

1.8 Summary

Throughout the 1960s Fabro speaks of "resolution" and "reduction" as the method of metaphysical reflection in five contexts: 1) as the method by which we discover *ens* as *primum cognitum*; 2) with respect to the "derivation" of the transcendentals and foundation of the first principles; 3) as a resolution of perfection and act; 4) in relation to causality; and 5) as the method by means of which we come to know *esse* in metaphysics.

1) *Ens* as *primum cognitum*. Our examination of Fabro's texts from the 1960s confirms the increasing importance given to the role of *ens* as *primum cognitum*. He argues extensively that *ens* is initially grasped by the intellect in an "apprehension" and that this mental act should not be called or confused with an "abstraction", which is proper to the grasping of an essence. The main reason for this is that *esse* is "implicitly" grasped within *ens* as *primum cognitum*. In light of this, Fabro begins to characterize the initial apprehension of *ens* as a "synthetic apprehension" of a "plexus of act and content" and sees tremendous potential in this, for it is his response (on a theoretical level) to the problematic of modern thought (Kant, Hegel). This initial, "*noetical* plexus" implies a "*real* nexus" and dialectical tension between essence and *esse*. In "The Transcendentality of *Ens-Esse* and the Ground of Metaphysics" (1966), Fabro holds that resolution is the method by which the metaphysician establishes that *ens* is the *primum cognitum* and uses *De Veritate*, q. 1, a. 1 as his source text. The nature of this resolution is specified in the connection of resolution to the transcendentals and first principles of the intellect.

2) Resolution, the transcendentals and the first principles of the intellect. Basing himself on *De Veritate*, q. 1, a. 1, Fabro argues that the transcendentals, insofar as they are the first notions of the process of "*additio*" to *ens*, also imply a "returning to *ens*" in that *ens* is the notion in which all other notions are resolved. This implies a *reductio* to fundament which Fabro describes as a process of intensive and comprehensive foundation. Fabro specifies that this process of intension-comprehension is "*additio*". This process of *additio* is also characterized as combining the processes of analysis, insofar as there is an interior dividing-up of *ens*, and of synthesis, insofar as there is a re-composition of these notions in the comprehensive unity of *ens*. The first, the intentional expansion of *ens*, happens in two directions: the predicamental and transcendental. Fabro speaks of *additio* as a process of intension-comprehension because the categories and transcendentals do not add something to *ens* from the outside, but rather restrict *ens* to a certain genus (substance, accidents…) or

make explicit something that is already implicit in *ens* (e.g., *verum* as *ens intelligibile*). The second aspect of "re-composition in *ens*" is also described as a *resolutio*, especially in regard to the foundation of the first principle on *ens* and *non ens*. Thus, the movement of "expansion" into knowledge and science is complemented by the movement of "convergence", bringing the plurality of principles to their foundation on the first principles and resolving the first principles into *ens*.

3) Resolution of perfection and act. Resolution, as the proper method of Thomistic metaphysics, is specified as a dual resolution of perfection and act. Fabro's brief references to the resolution of the less perfect into the more perfect call to mind the "dialectical ascension" of *NMP*, which moves from the individual who participates in a species and genus to the perfections proper to such a genus. Such perfections are "resolved" into *ipsum esse* as the perfection of all perfections. The resolution of act to act refers to the path from accidental acts and forms to substantial act and form and from these to *esse* as the act of all acts. In this resolution of act, essence (form) is reduced to a determinative and receptive potency-principle with respect to *esse*. Fabro's brief analysis of St. Thomas's philosophical historiography shows how metaphysics ought to progress from the phenomenon of accidental change and the distinction between substance and accidents through the problem of substantial change and to the problem of creation in light of the distinction between essence and *esse*. St. Thomas's *De substantiis separatis* explicitly speaks of a resolution into principles (resolution into matter and form; resolution into *id quod est* and *esse*). The resolution of act is highlighted in Fabro's analysis of *De substantiis separatis* and the itinerary he outlines from the problem of substance-accidents to that of essence-*esse*.

One of the novelties in this decade of Fabro's thought is his argument for the participation and the limitation of the act of the essence of spiritual creatures. Fabro argues that Geiger's bifurcation of Thomistic participation into two "systems" and bestowal of priority on the participation by similitude leads theoretically to a self-limitation of act and, therefore, to an objection against the Thomistic real distinction between essence and *esse* in creatures. For Fabro, the reduction of form and all other formal acts and perfections to "potency" or to "participants" involves the notion of predicamental participation. Fabro's metaphysical reflection goes beyond a merely logical consideration of the species-genus participation, and considers it from the perspective of a real-formal participation. The spiritual creature's essence is only relatively infinite and, in effect, belongs to a genus. On the formal level, the essence is limited *in* itself – not *by* itself –

since it does not realize the entire virtual perfection of the genus to which it belongs. In this way, Fabro has defended the principle of the limitation of act as one of the pillars of Thomistic metaphysics.

4) Resolution, causality and participation. Another novelty is Fabro's *explicit* distinction between the "first foundation" of *ens* by means of a resolution-reduction of act to act (accidental and substantial formal acts to *actus essendi*) and a "second foundation", entailing a reduction of participated *actus essendi* on *Esse per essentiam*. This second foundation involves a demonstration (of the existence of *Esse per essentiam*), but is not exhausted in the demonstration. In other words the Thomistic resolution or reduction to fundament is accomplished by the convergence of Aristotelian act and the metaphysics of participation. This reduction and comprehension of *esse* within *ens* as participation entails the demonstration of God as First Cause, yet should not be characterized solely as a demonstration. This is important since the metaphysician should not reduce the creature's *esse* to its "extrinsic" relationship of causal dependence on the Creator alone. The intrinsic nature of the transcendental, participated act of *esse* must be maintained. At the same time, one should privilege what Fabro calls the "transcendental immanence" of God's presence *per essentiam* in creatures.

With this premise in mind, Fabro deals with the nature of St. Thomas's argumentation for a universal cause of *esse*, tracing the development of such argumentation and bringing out the convergence on the notion of participation. Fabro specifies that the Fourth Way involves a passage from the plane of formal perfections to the real plane of causality. This is in agreement with Fabro's proposal of undertaking an initial, formal resolution of all perfections to *esse* in metaphysics before embarking on a real resolution of *esse* according to act and causality. Although there is a pedagogical difference between the argument of the Fourth Way in the demonstration of God's existence and in the demonstration of creation and the real distinction in creatures, the metaphysical content of these demonstrations is founded on the principle of participation and concerns the ultimate determination of *ens qua ens*. St. Thomas's first formulas of the principle of participation concern perfection-imperfection, while later formulas concern the commonness and emergence (priority) of *esse ut actus* according to the notion of participation. Fabro calls the arguments that emphasize the commonness and priority of the act of being an authentic *resolutio in esse*. The radical commonness of *esse* requires a common cause, capable of producing *esse* from nothing. The problem of the common causality of *esse*, then, involves the determination of the metaphysical relationship between *esse* and *ens* by means of a resolution of *ens* into *esse*,

determining the creature (*ens*) as that which has participated *esse* and God (*Primum Ens*) as *Ipsum Esse Subsistens*. Fabro holds that in metaphysical reflection God is first seen as *Primum Ens* (*in via inventionis*) and only subsequently as *Esse Subsistens* (*in via resolutionis* or *via iudicii*). As a "resolution", it is a more resolution of essence into *esse* than of *esse* into essence.

5) Resolution and knowledge of *esse*. Fabro argues that St. Thomas comes to his discovery of *esse* by means of a quasi-concentric reflection on *ens*. In the apprehension of *ens*, the composition of essence and *esse* is implicitly contained. In light of this, we see that our knowledge of *esse* is not obtained simply by means of an abstraction or judgment, but rather by means of resolution and argumentation. The apprehension of *ens* is the fundamental noetic principle; it is truly a transcendental *synolum* and plexus of essence and *esse*, including a dialectic (*essentia* and *esse*) and a reference to the Absolute (*esse participatum* to *Esse per essentiam*). Because *esse* is act and not content (essence), the metaphysical notion of *actus essendi* is not obtained by an abstraction, but rather through argumentation and "dialectical" reasoning. This argumentation either brings to light the "originality of *esse*" (principle of the emergence of act; principle of separated perfection) or the difference between the participated *esse* of the creature and divine *esse* (principle of separated perfection; principle of participation). Lastly, "emergence" requires to the emergence of act over act (*esse* over form, *esse* over *ens*). Thus, the apprehension of *esse* is seen to involve argumentation, demonstration, resolution and reduction.

To summarize this with the points made above, we can say that Fabro considers the determination of *esse ut actus* as a "resolution to ground" and as involving a movement of thought from the predicamental order (accidental and substantial acts) to the metaphysical order of the pure perfections and *esse*: *Esse* emerges over all other acts and perfections. In this reduction to ground, the operative principle is the emergence of act. The determination of the metaphysical relationship of *esse* to *ens* entails a reduction to fundament and convergence of act and participation. Participated *esse* is founded on *Esse per essentiam*. This moment of comprehending *esse* in *ens* as participated, initially involves the demonstration of God's existence and as First Cause. The reflection, however, is not exhausted in this demonstration or in the affirmation of an extrinsic, causal relation of dependence. Metaphysical reflection proceeds from beings to *esse* according to a *reductio ad principium* and resolution to fundament. This metaphysical reflection is not characterized as a Hegelian "leap" from beings to being, but rather as a "passage", since *esse* is present

from the beginning in the originary apprehension of *ens*. This reaffirms the Thomistic conception of the constitutive immanence of participated *esse* and avoids the dangers inherent in the Scholastic reduction of *esse* to *existentia* and the realm of extrinsic causality.

2. Metaphysical reflection (1970-1979)

With the exception of an article on participation published in English in 1974 – which, in fact, is largely a translation of an article in Italian from 1967 – almost every article that Fabro published in the 1970s on metaphysics and being focuses in some way on a theoretical confrontation between Aquinas and Heidegger. In this confrontation, there are several recurring elements: Fabro continues to adopt and adapt the Heideggerian critique of the formalistic turn of Western philosophy (Plato, Aristotle, Scholasticism in general); second, he emphasizes the "reduction to foundation (*grund*)" common to both philosophers; third, he concludes that Heidegger is trapped in a phenomenological-ontic-immanent conception of *Sein* and that only Aquinas's *esse* is truly open to the transcendence that the reduction to foundation calls for. With regard to metaphysical reflection, Fabro consistently emphasizes the roles of resolution and reduction.

In this section, then, we will look at five of Fabro's articles and works from this period: his paper on the "return to foundation" and subsequent debate on the problem of foundation (2.1); methodological indications in his article on the notion of participation (2.2); an important article entitled "The problem of being and the foundation of metaphysics" (2.3); an article on the interpretation of act in St. Thomas and Heidegger (2.4); and his critique of Karl Rahner's anthropological turn in metaphysics (2.5)

2.1 The return to fundament (1972-1973)

At a national congress on "The Problem of the Fundament" held in 1972, Fabro presented a paper entitled: "The Return to Fundament: Contribution for a Confrontation between Heidegger's Ontology and St. Thomas Aquinas's Metaphysics"[166]. The debate that followed was also published[167] and offers a glimpse into the main metaphysical ideas and

[166] C. FABRO, "Il ritorno al fondamento. Contributo per un confronto tra l'ontologia di Heidegger e la metafisica di S. Tommaso d'Aquino", *Sapienza* 26 (1973), 265-278.

[167] AA.VV., "Dibattito congressuale", *Sapienza* 26 (1973), 357-432.

principles that Fabro had at the forefront of his mind. It is interesting to note how frequent his references to resolution are and how he presents it as the solution to the questions and problems posed by the other participants in the debate[168]. First, let us consider Fabro's paper.

Fabro first draws attention to Heidegger's proposal of returning to the fundament of metaphysics: "M. Heidegger, on the model of 'essential philosophers' (*wesentliche Denker*), conceives the 'return [or reduction] to the fundament of metaphysics (*der Rückgang in den Grund der Metaphysik*) as the task of philosophical reflection in the current epoch"[169]. In the end, however, the confrontation between Thomistic metaphysics and Heideggerian ontology reveals that there is only a thematic convergence between Aquinas and Heidegger, and that Heidegger's proposal is largely unacceptable from a doctrinal standpoint[170]. This thematic convergence is summarized by Fabro as follows (my numbering):

> [1] In fact, we can say, first of all, that both "think back", or follow the regressive method of "return to foundation" (*Rüchgang in den Grund*) which is proper of essential thinkers.
> [2] Further, both see this foundation in the reduction to being, or by means of the illumination of *ens* or being in being [*essente nell'essere*].
> [3] As well, in both, the (knowledge of the) truth of being precedes the (knowledge of) causal dependence, namely reality (existence) is not identified with effectuality and the truth of reality is not founded on causality.
> [4] Consequently, both refute the (modal) distinction of *essentia* and *existentia* and consider that it is principally responsible, on the theoretical plane, for the forgetfulness of being and of absolute voluntarism which is

[168] In his article on Fabro and the method of metaphysics as *resolutio*, J. Villagrasa dedicates several pages to the debate, rightly emphasizing its polemical character and its importance in order to grasp Fabro's proposal: J. VILLAGRASA, "La *resolutio* come metodo…", 38-42.

[169] C. FABRO, "Il ritorno al fondamento…", 265.

[170] C. FABRO, "Il ritorno al fondamento…", 270: "We are not dealing with a doctrinal accord between Heidegger and St. Thomas, which cannot be had on any point, but rather with a convergence in the theme and in the basic problematic […]. We are dealing with – to use a dialectical formula – a converging divergence or a diverging convergence, which stimulates, in our opinion, a confrontation of extreme tension to work out a positive bringing together between Heidegger and St. Thomas: a convergence of moments, a divergence of basic orientation and, therefore, of prospective. More than the formulas are the problems themselves that should guide the confrontation".

the true essence (according to Heidegger) of Western nihilism[171].

With these four points in mind, Fabro concludes that due to this convergence on "returning to fundament" it is no longer possible to think about a return (*ripresa*) to Thomism without taking into account the Heideggerian "lesson" (*la lezione heideggeriana*).

Along with presenting the thematic convergence, Fabro's article also contrasts the foundational attempts of Heidegger and Aquinas and establishes the superiority of the Thomistic proposal, which – Fabro holds – Heidegger has either intentionally or unintentionally overlooked: "[Heidegger] completely ignores the *resolutio ad fundamentum* that Aquinas has accomplished by means of the *Diremtion* of *esse per essentiam* (God) and *ens per participationem* (creature) and the discovery-position of the concept of *esse* as first intensive act"[172]. Fabro first draws attention to the limits inherent in Heidegger's *Sein* as presence: "Therefore, [Heidegger's] *reductio ad fundamentum* is in the radical indifferentiated both as subject (*es*) and as act (*geben*), beyond all immanence and transcendence, in the perennial simple presence according to the ontic demand of the plexus *Sein-Seiende*"[173]. In contrast, St. Thomas's *reductio* ends in the difference between Creator and creature and the distinction between essence and *esse* in the creature: "St. Thomas's *reductio ad fundamentum* is at the exact opposite pole in the radical differentiation of *Esse per essentiam* and *ens per participationem* which involves the radical real distinction – in the creature – of participating essence and participated *esse*, as both transcendental possibility and consequence of creation"[174]. Fabro ends his paper by stating that because no one has succeeded as Heidegger has in placing Western thought and Christian thought into a radical crisis, it is from Heidegger, then, that the discourse on the return to fundament should begin. However, it should also proceed in an opposite direction (*per oppositam viam*), along the path trod by St. Thomas[175].

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[171] C. FABRO, "Il ritorno al fondamento…", 271.

[172] C. FABRO, "Il ritorno al fondamento…", 269.

[173] C. FABRO, "Il ritorno al fondamento…", 277.

[174] C. FABRO, "Il ritorno al fondamento…", 277-278.

[175] See C. FABRO, "Il ritorno al fondamento…", 278: "Nessun filosofo contemporaneo, anzi nessun filosofo moderno, ha messo in crisi radicale il pensiero occidentale e lo stesso pensiero cristiano come Heidegger. Per questo allora è da Heidegger che deve partire il discorso del ritorno al fondamento: ma *per aliam*, *per oppositam viam*".

With regard to the debate between the participants at the congress, J. Villagrasa adequately summarizes the main themes in play and the way Fabro brings his fellow Thomists to debate him: 1) the *task* of philosophical reflection consists in the reduction-resolution-return to the fundament of metaphysics; 2) Heidegger's *critique* of Scholastic *existentia* is legitimate. St. Thomas, however, is exempt from Heidegger's critique and effectively realized the *reductio ad fundamentum* Heidegger proposed yet sought in vain as he ends in immanence[176]. Villagrasa points out that the other participants in the debate agreed that the essential task of metaphysics consists in a resolution or reduction to a *primum* or *fundamentum*, yet that it was not clear *how* this return out to be carried out: "Different proposals were judged rather negatively: abstraction, Maritain's eidetic intuition, Geiger's *separatio*, the excessive emphasis given to judgment and the *reditio completa* as interpreted by Fr. Lotz"[177]. Villagrasa points out that Fabro was asked twice in the debate to describe the nature of his proposal of *resolutio*.

In his answers, Fabro speaks of resolution as "analysis", "radical reflection" and as an "itinerary": "Penetrating into and making an analysis of the structure (first ontological and then metaphysical) of the finite, I can consider the finite, then rise to that *reflexio radicalis* and say that *ens participat esse, habet esse.* Behold, therefore, the itinerary"[178]. Later on, Fabro was asked how one arrives at or touches (*si attinge*) *esse.* He responded by contrasting our apprehension of *ens* and our apprehension of *esse.* He points out that we have a direct immediate experience

[176] See J. VILLAGRASA, "La *resolutio* come metodo…", 38-40: "Fabro, as he did willingly and often, dared to challenge and provoke this important group of Thomists with Heidegger. The provocation was presented in the following terms. At the time, it is impossible to think of a true taking up of Thomism leaving aside the task and critique offered by Heidegger: the *task* of philosophical reflection consists in the reduction-resolution-return to the fundament of metaphysics; the Heideggerian *critique* is legitimate; the loss of the sense of being was provoked by the formal distinction of *essentia-existentia* as it was understood by the Second Scholastic – Nominalism and Suárez in particular –, which came to modern thought as the real identity of thought and reality. Thomas Aquinas, however, avoids this [loss]. What is more, he was the one to realize the resolutive *task* proposed by Heidegger thanks to a process which he pursued by means of the *real* distinction of *essentia* and *esse* and which comes to the demonstration of the existence of God".

[177] J. VILLAGRASA, "La *resolutio* come metodo…", 40-41.

[178] C. FABRO, in "Dibattito congressuale", 393.

(apprehension) of *ens* and that reflection on *ens* permits a certain *content* of being and *act* of being to emerge. Fabro's reference to resolution as a movement from accidental acts to substantial acts and from these to *esse* is explicit:

> I did not say that *ens* is gotten from immediate perception, but from immediate apprehension. From *ens*, thus understood, one comes to *esse* […] by means of a resolutive and not abstractive process. Therefore, by a resolutive process, of a resolution to the principle, of act to act: from accidental acts to substantial act, from substantial act to entitative act[179]. Within *ens* there is a dialectic. *Ens est id quod habet esse*, it is a composition of essence and *esse*: a composition that is not immediately evident. But digging within it one comes to this ultimate resolution[180]. We should work on substantial *ens* to arrive at being[181].

Further on in the debate, Fabro returns to the theme of resolution in response to three questions of P. Della Valentina: 1) Is there a relationship between *actus essendi* and Heideggerian being? 2) Excluding an immediate relationship to *actus essendi* and the mediation of a concept, what type of knowledge does *actus essendi* belong to? 3) Can you provide us with a synthesis of your thought stripped from its numerous historical references?[182] Fabro's response avoids the reference to Heidegger in the first question and dwells on the relationship between *actus essendi* and *ens*, re-affirms resolution as the way in which *esse* is determined and proposes walking with and entering into dialogue with "essential thinkers" to answer the first question about *actus essendi* and *ens*:

> I will be brief. The question is this: what is the relationship between *actus essendi* and *ens*, creaturely being. The relationship is very simple: starting from

[179] C. FABRO, in "Dibattito congressuale", 403.

[180] C. FABRO, in "Dibattito congressuale", 407: "Entro l'*ens* c'è tutta una dialettica. *Ens est id quod habet esse*, è composizione di essenza ed *esse*: composizione che non è immediatamente evidente. Però scavando dentro si arriva a quest'ultima risoluzione".

[181] C. FABRO, in "Dibattito congressuale", 411.

[182] See P. DELLA VALENTINA, in "Dibattito congressuale", 419: "Al P. Fabro chiederei: 1) C'è un rapporto tra *actus essendi* e l'essere heideggeriano? 2) Avendo egli escluso sia il rapporto immediato con l'*actus essendi*, sia la mediazione del concetto, a quale tipo di conoscenza bisogna riferirsi? […] 3) Come corregionale mi permetto di esprimere un desiderio (e qui siamo fuori tema!) condiviso da molti; Le chiederemmo una sintesi essenziale del suo pensiero, spoglia di tanti richiami storici che rischiano di distoglierci dal fissare il nudo contenuto del Suo pensiero".

> the plexus *ens*, *id quod habet esse*, *esse* is the *actus* (*essendi*) of every *ens*; and every *ens* has its own *actus essendi*. Such *ens*, though, is participated, as I said yesterday quoting *De Causis*. Thus, what is the relationship between *actus essendi*, interiorization, resolution? Namely, how do we come to isolate [*actus essendi*]? And if we do not isolate it, how do we come to grasp, to determine – all inadequate terms – this *actus essendi*?
>
> You have attributed interiorization to me: if I said this, I take it back, since I said to Fr. Bogliolo that I do not want that term "interiorization". Fr. Lotz has taken it to himself; but in the position of Fr. Lotz such a term works well, since he pursues the entire internal process of *resolutio* by means of his process of *reditio completa*. I, instead, am for the simple *resolutio*, i.e., there is *ens*, which makes the existence of a nature, of a reality, present. Existence is the fact of the synthesis of essence and act of being, placed in reality. Existence is an effect, a result, a fact. *Esse*, on the other hand, is *id quod et magis intimum, profundum*. The immediate, from which we should begin, is *ens*; and on this point I believe the greatest metaphysicians are not very far apart. But the problem is in the *resolutio* of this *ens*, i.e., in the determination of *esse*, of the act by which something is called *ens*.
>
> One last thing. You ask me for an accessible synthesis of my work: often other friends ask me for this. Perhaps, and I hope so, that I see the occasion to write this *compendium*: but the indispensible way is that of first walking with the "essential philosophers", of dialoguing with them and grasping, in their work, the ultimate sense of the demand and the project of the first question[183].

Although the Thomistic "reduction to foundation" is radically connected to the real distinction, participation and creation, there is also a reduction to foundation on the gnoseological level and thus the apprehension of first concepts and principles and their apprehension at the end of metaphysical reflection. In the debate, Fabro began his remarks by saying that: "Foundation is that which is placed at the base [*fondo*] and from the base the point of departure is made"[184]. The problem of foundation, then, is also concerned with the problem of our initial and ultimate apprehension of *ens* and *esse*: "The problem of foundation in the resolution of being brings us indirectly to the identification of the specificity of our spiritual nature, because we grasp being properly by means of the profound *apex*

[183] C. FABRO, in "Dibattito congressuale", 420-421.
[184] C. FABRO, "Allocuzioni introduttive al dibattito", 357 .

mentis, because our spirituality is manifested first of all and above all by means of the grasping of being"[185].

* * *

In brief, Fabro's responses in the debate reaffirm his view of the importance of resolution and reduction as the proper method of Thomistic metaphysics,. Fabro's *resolution*, in contrast to other proposals, such as intuition, judgment, *reditio complete,* is equated with "analysis" and is spoken about principally in terms of a resolution of act. The consideration of finite *ens* leads the metaphysician to the determination that finite *ens* participates in *esse*. Only by means of "reflection" on *ens* (which is initially obtained in a direct, immediate apprehension) does a distinction between content and act emerge. Within *ens* there is a dialectic, a composition of essence (content) and *esse* (act). One comes to *esse* through a process of resolution of act to act: from accidental acts and forms to *actus essendi*. For Fabro, resolution is simply the metaphysical itinerary from *ens* to determination of *esse*, the act by which something is called "*ens*".

2.2 The Thomistic notion of participation (1967-1974)

Fabro begins his 1974 article on the notion of participation[186] by drawing attention to the importance of the notion:

> In an attempt to solve crucial issues of the constitutive relation between God and creatures, between the Infinite and the finite – such as those concerning total dependence (creation and divine motion), radical structure (composition of *essentia* and *esse*) and fundamental semantics (analogy) – St. Thomas had placed the Platonic notion of participation at the very foundation of the Aristotelian couplet of act and potency[187].

Fabro argues that his research on participation has established that the Thomistic notion of *ens* and the Thomistic notion of *esse* as intensive,

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[185] C. FABRO, in "Dibattito congressuale", 431-432.

[186] C. FABRO, "The Intensive Hermeneutics of Thomistic Philosophy (The Notion of Participation)", *The Review of Metaphysics* 27 (1974), 449-491. Originally, "Elementi per una dottrina tomistica della partecipazione", *Divinitas* 11 (1967) 559-586; reprinted in *ET*, 421-448. First English translation appeared in "Participation", *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. X, 1042-1046.

[187] C. FABRO, "The Intensive Hermeneutics…", 450.

emergent act were developed according to that same notion of participation. In this way, St. Thomas surpassed the limits characteristic of classical thought and the essentialism or formalistic tendency of Scholastic thought. St. Thomas brought the principles of Plato and Aristotle into agreement by elaborating his own notion of participation and it is this notion that presents an entirely new concept and principle: the notion of *esse* as *actus essendi*. Hence, Fabro affirms: "It is from the concept of *esse* as ground-laying first act that Thomas develops his own notion of participation and his entire metaphysics"[188]. *Actus essendi* and participation mutually clarify one another. For Fabro, then:

> The notion of participation expresses the ultimate point of reference both from the static viewpoint of the creature's structure and from the dynamic viewpoint of its dependence on God. This notion takes from Platonism the idea of exemplar relationship and absolute distinction between participating being and *Esse subsistens*, and from Aristotelianism the principle of real composition and real causality at every level of participated, finite being[189].

According to Fabro, it is better to speak of an "emergent synthesis" or *Aufhebung* of Platonic exemplarity and Aristotelian composition in the Thomistic notion of participation, rather than two distinct "systems" of participation, as Geiger has done[190]. The authentic notion of Thomistic participation, Fabro argues, entails a distinction between *esse* as act of being (a metaphysical principle) and existence as the *fact* of being (a result of the real composition of essence and *esse*). The lack of such a distinction explains to some degree the confusion of those Thomists who attempt to ground both the experience and apprehension of being in the act of judgment. In light of this confusion, Fabro agrees wholeheartedly with G. Lindbeck's assessment that: "The participationist motifs unquestionably present in the thought of Aquinas are a more likely source for the

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[188] C. FABRO, "The Intensive Hermeneutics…", 450.

[189] C. FABRO, "The Intensive Hermeneutics…", 469.

[190] C. FABRO, "The Intensive Hermeneutics…", 469: "To assert, as has been done (Geiger), that Thomas holds as distinct participation by similitude (*secundum similitudinem*) and participation by composition (*secundum compositionem*), is to break the Thomistic synthesis at its center, which is the assimilation and mutual subordination of the couplets of act-potency and *participatum-participans* in the emergence of the new concept of *esse*. Such a view compromises at its root the meaning and function of radical *Diremtion* of the distinction between *essentia* and *esse*".

metaphysical theory of *actus essendi* than in the judgmental knowledge of existence emphasized by Gilson"[191].

Lindbeck's article shows the methodological import of Fabro's proposal and effectively contrasts the limits of the "judgment approach" (Gilson) to the grasping of *esse* with the participation approach (Fabro). A reaction to Lindbeck's and Fabro's article was written in 1976 by Frederick Wilhelmsen[192], in which he takes up their thesis that "*esse* is not affirmed in judgment"[193]. Existence, for Fabro, is a *result* of metaphysical principles; this *result*, then, is not equivalent to *actus essendi.* This, Wilhelmsen holds, can mean one of two things: either existence is just a human way of conceptualizing what is first known in judgment or it is some sort of "fifth nature", neither matter, form, the composite substance or *actus essendi*, but a consequence or *result* that is distinct from the complexity of principles which brings about this "fact of being"[194].

With respect to the first possibility, Wilhelmsen emphasizes the role of the "judgment of separation" in Thomistic metaphysics: "If the philosophy of nature and the mathematical sciences come to terms with their objects by way of abstractions which are proper to the act of simple understanding, metaphysics distinguishes – not by abstracting, strictly speaking, but by separating metaphysical principles from the essential structures in which they are found"[195]. In a footnote, Wilhelmsen quotes the literature relevant to the role of the judgment of separation and makes the following critique of Fabro's proposal:

> Cornelio Fabro's contention that Thomistic metaphysics is better forwarded by a study of participation theory than by disengaging propositions about being

[191] G. LINDBECK, "Participation and Existence in the Interpretation of St. Thomas", *Franciscan Studies*, 17 (1957) 1-22 and 107-125.

[192] F. WILHELMSEN, "Existence and *Esse*", *The New Scholasticism*, 50 (1976), 20-45.

[193] F. WILHELMSEN, "Existence and *Esse*", 29.

[194] See F. WILHELMSEN, "Existence and *Esse*", 30.

[195] F. WILHELMSEN, "Existence and *Esse*", 31. With regard to the real distinction, he writes: "The real distinction between essence and existence, central – according to Fabro – to St. Thomas' metaphysics – is known by comparing the two ways in which any nature can exist and by thus *denying* ("relative separation"; abstraction without precision) that being is identically any one of its determinations. The priority of *esse* over essence is known thanks to a judgment which insists that no nature can by prescinded (separated absolutely) from *some* existing" (32).

> from the exigencies of judgment must confront the weight of literature indicated above[196], which points out that St. Thomas himself explicitly rooted metaphysics in judgment and he did so because judgment is a knowing of *esse*. A reduction of judgmental knowledge to an "existence" which is not *esse* in St. Thomas' sense of the term renders his *In Boeth. De Trin*., teaching unintelligible. What is of greater import, however, is that any Thomistic metaphysician who retraces the reasoning that leads him to conclude that *esse* is act of all acts must find at work – in the actual exercise of his own thinking – the judgment of separation[197].

Wilhelmsen specifies that this separation involves the affirmation that substance need not be material; this affirmation "is not achieved by abstracting further but by a judgmental 'leap', a separation of being (*esse*) from matter and motion"[198]. Wilhelmsen concludes that "direct concepts" are restricted to matter-form composites and that we do not have "direct concepts" of metaphysical concepts (act, potency, transcendentals, and so on) – such metaphysical concepts are all "functions of judgments of separation"[199]. While Wilhelmsen agrees with Fabro and Lindbeck on the special nature of the conceptualization of *esse*, he confesses ignorance as to why they don't see the central role of judgment in the grasping of being.

With respect to the second possibility – existence as "*result*" of metaphysical principles (including *esse*) – this seems to imply a "distinction" between existence and *esse*. Wilhelmsen argues that Fabro cannot mean that "existence as result" is efficiently caused by the principles. In *De ente et essentia* St. Thomas admits that *esse* is the result of the principles of nature, such causality is of the order of formal causality. Against Fabro, Wilhelmsen argues that this *esse* is a "result", yet is not distinct from "existence":

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[196] See L.-B. GEIGER, "Abstraction et separation d'après Saint Thomas", *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques*, 48 (1946), 328-329; D. J. ROBERT, "La Metaphysique science distinct de toute autre discipline philosophique selon saint Thomas d'Aquin", *Divus Thomas*, 50 (1947), 206-223; J. OWENS, *An Elementary Christian Metaphysics*, The Bruce Publishing Company, Milwaukee 1963, 96-97; R. SCHMIDT, "L'Emploi de la Separation en Metaphysique", *Revue Philosophique de Louvain*, 58 (1960), 373-393.

[197] F. WILHELMSEN, "Existence and *Esse*", 32, n. 28.

[198] F. WILHELMSEN, "Existence and *Esse*", 35.

[199] F. WILHELMSEN, "Existence and *Esse*", 35.

> There is one sense in which Aquinas does grant that *esse* is a result of the principles of nature, and the existence he is talking about is *not* existence as distinct from *esse* (Fabro's thesis); it is not existence as a fact of being, itself distinct not only from essential principles but from *esse* as well (Fabro's thesis); but precisely existence as *esse*, *esse* not as "causing itself" – a contradiction – but *esse* as caused by all of the other metaphysical dimensions going into any given *ens*. *Esse*, insists St. Thomas, is truly caused by the principles of essence but this causality is located within the order of specification, within the order of formal causality[200].

Wilhelmsen characterizes the mutual causality as being very delicate: in the order of being, *esse* is absolutely first of all principles; in the order of specification, essence is prior. Thus, the specification of *esse* is a "result" of the principles of nature. Wilhelmsen goes on to argue that *esse* has a synthesizing function in a composite being and that the verb "to be" touches on this composing role of *esse.* The existence known in judgment is not distinct from *esse*, but is rather "to be" (*esse*) itself[201]. Wilhelmsen summarizes his entire argument as a conclusion, reiterating the role of judgment in grasping existence, which should not be distinguished from *esse*[202].

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[200] F. WILHELMSEN, "Existence and *Esse*", 38.

[201] F. WILHELMSEN, "Existence and *Esse*", 41-42: "Existence is not a component in synthesis but is the synthesizing of the components. This *esse* in turn is totally specified and determined by the principles of nature that *esse* 'togethers', of which 'to be' is the very 'gathering together'. *Esse*, in this formal and specific sense of the order of specification, truly does not result from nature. It follows that the existence known in judgment is not distinct from *esse*, as is a result from an efficient cause, but is rather the 'to be' itself, the being of a common nature composed with a subject of existence. Judgment is genuinely an understanding of existence. This existence, we have argued, is the very Thomistic *esse*, not as conceptualized metaphysically and thus rendered a subject of predication, but as known directly in judgment, known not as some subsisting 'thing' but known precisely as the being of what is affirmed, the existent, a being which consists in the composing of the principles of nature. Existence as the fact of being is not a follow-up on *esse*, not a consequence, but the being of things themselves. Thus is *esse* known in judgment".

[202] F. WILHELMSEN, "Existence and *Esse*", 43-45: "The argument advanced in this essay can be summarized in terms of the ways in which *esse* is prior and posterior to that thing of which *esse* is its being. Essence is posterior to *esse* in that, without being, essence is nothing; essence is also posterior to being, in that the composition in which essence consists *exists*, thanks to the synthesizing of the

Several points in Fabro's defense should be made here: 1) By concentrating solely on the 1974 article, Wilhelmsen's argument is based on an incomplete and partial reading of Fabro's work. For example, he writes that "A reasoned explication and defense of Aquinas' use of participation is advanced in [Fabro's article], but no reasoned attack on the primacy of the theory of judgment is forthcoming"[203]. The article, as we have noted, is in large part a translation of the Conclusion to Fabro's *Participation and Causality* (1960). And, as we have seen, the Introduction to *PC* and several sections on the emergence of Thomistic *esse* were dedicated to such an "attack". No mention is made of Fabro's work on the initial apprehension of *ens*, the metaphysical "apprehension" of *esse* or the formal causality of *esse*; nor does Wilhelmsen take into consideration the metaphysical problems which a distinction between existence as "fact of being" and *esse* as "act of being" effectively resolves: the *esse* of the accidents, whether Christ had one *esse* or two, etc… 2) Wilhelmsen makes no mention of Fabro's theory of a

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elements of the composition, by *esse*. Essence is prior (in a secondary sense) in that *esse* follows essence as being determined by the principles which *esse* both posits and of which *esse* is their synthesizing activity, their unity. In this sense – and only in this sense – is the act of being the result of essential principles; this *esse* is equivalently 'existing' (or 'existence') in several of the currently accepted meanings given the word in English; this *esse* – and not some 'fifth nature' called 'existence' and thought to be a result of *esse* – is directly known in judgments of experience and is known as synthesizing activity in all judgments of the third adjacent. *Esse*, thus, is both prior (absolutely) and posterior (relatively) to that of which *esse* is being. This *esse* known in judgment is not known as though it were a thing, subsisting in itself, and capable of being understood through any direct conceptualization as is nature. […] When 'existence' is suppressed in favor of *esse*, not on the grounds of linguistic propriety but on the grounds that 'existence' – affirmed or denied of things in judgment – is somehow posterior to and not identically the Thomistic act of being, then the foundation of Thomistic realism is at stake. We build a metaphysics of *esse* as act thanks to our awareness that there is an act in the mind that answers the act of being in the real: judgment. That act is a direct and intellectually unmediated knowing – on the level of direct experience – that things are. The enterprise of Thomistic metaphysics, of existential Thomism, is the disengagement, thanks to judgments of separation, of exigencies concerning this 'to be' of things. The 'is' of a thing when articulated metaphysically is reasoned 'about'; but that 'is' is not initially reasoned 'to'; 'is' does not screen itself behind some 'existence' understood as 'emergence' (an essence) or 'standing out' (another essence). That 'is' is directly known, not – as insisted upon – as subsisting thing but as – words here fail – 'is'".

[203] F. WILHELMSEN, "Existence and *Esse*", 21.

resolution of act and perfection. *Resolutio* – as the method by which we come to know *esse* (both participated *actus essendi* and *Ipsum Esse Subsistens*) – is an adequate, Thomistic-based theory which can rival Wilhelmsen's proposal of judgments of separation. 3) Thirdly, the Fabrian distinction between existence and the act of being is not exhausted by the two interpretations Wilhelmsen puts forward: existence as the human way of conceptualizing what is known in judgment and existence as a "fifth nature" or "result" and "fact of being". Tthe best characterization of the Fabrian distinction between existence and *esse* lies more properly in the difference he makes between existence as being-in-act (*esse-in-actu*) and *actus essendi* as being-as-act (*esse-ut-actus*). In this way, we distinguish the "actuality" (the being-in-act) proper to a subsisting *ens* and its principles and the actuating principle itself. Just as Fabro does not see *ens* – the "result" of the composition of the principles essence and *esse*) – as a *tertium quid*, he does not conceive "existence" as a *tertium quid* or "fifth nature". 4) Finally, one of the strongest arguments for Fabro's resolution-participation proposal is the way in which it encompasses and guides the entire metaphysical itinerary, including the demonstration of the real distinction, the existence of God, the demonstration of creation and the metaphysical foundation of analogy[204].

Returning to Fabro's article, we see that he has inserted the concluding summary of his theory of participation (static-compositional and dynamic-causal) and analogy found in *PC*, 639-651. He states that there are three moments in the foundation of the truth of being: composition, causality, predication. All three are founded upon and related to *esse*, which, as universal act, binds them together[205]. These are the last lines of *PC* and the 1967 Italian article. The updated 1974 English article continues on with an entire paragraph dedicated to metaphysical method and how the metaphysician determines *esse* as *actus essendi*. Here Fabro highlights a resolution-reduction of act to *esse* and a reduction of participated *esse* to *Esse per essentiam*:

[204] Authors who sustain the "judgment of separation" proposal as the "method of Thomistic metaphysics" (rather than as a part of the "constitution of the object of metaphysics") have yet to show how this method would structure metaphysics and how it is involved in the various themes of metaphysics (the transcendentals, analogy, creation, divine providence, exemplary causality, etc…).

[205] See C. FABRO, "The Intensive Hermeneutics…", 486.

> The metaphysical determination of *esse* as *actus essendi* in the sense of act of all acts, is proper to Aquinas and constitutes the transcendental foundation of the metaphysics of participation. This has been discovered by the strictly metaphysical method of resolution or reduction (*per resolutionem* or *per reductionem*)[206], as Aquinas often calls it, of accidental predicamental acts to substantial form and of both accidental and substantial acts to the more profound substantial act which is *esse*. It has also been discovered by the method of the absolute reduction of the act of being by participation to the *esse per essentiam*[207].

Fabro characterizes this resolution and reduction as a transition and upward movement from the given to act and from the finite to the Infinite[208].

This Thomistic solution is the answer to Heidegger's problem: "A creature has therefore its own participated *actus essendi* which enters into real composition with essence as its transcendental potency. God, on the other hand, is the *esse per essentiam* or separated *esse* which is both transcendent and grounding"[209]. At this point, Fabro highlights the three principles (emergence of act, separated perfection, participation) involved in the Thomistic synthesis, implicitly recalling his articles on the Fourth Way[210].

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[206] Fabro's footnote: "All things must be traced to one first principle... by which they are coordinated." (*De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 6).

[207] C. FABRO, "The Intensive Hermeneutics…", 486.

[208] C. FABRO, "The Intensive Hermeneutics…", 486: "This is a kind of transition, as well as upward movement, from the given to act and from the finite to the Infinite. The latter is no longer considered here as a given or as contained but rather as a giver and container, the act present in every act, the perfection of all perfections, and consequently as an invitation for man to direct his thought and aspirations toward the Absolute.

[209] C. FABRO, "The Intensive Hermeneutics…", 486-487.

[210] C. FABRO, "The intensive Hermeneutics…", 487-488: "The Platonic principle of the idea or separated perfection, holds true only with regard to the *esse* as the act of all acts and of all forms, which was unknown to Plato as well as to Aristotle. This principle of separated perfection is eminently of Platonic origin and must be integrated with the Aristotelian principle of the emergence of act. Both principles are indeed founded on the synthetic Thomistic principle of participation. But despite his general acceptance of the Platonic principle of separated perfection, Thomas follows Aristotle in rejecting its application to the forms as such and, going beyond Aristotle who does not know *esse* as act, applies it exclusively to *esse*. Thus *Esse ipsum* or *Esse subsistens* is God himself who is the first, immovable, and separated Principle situated, as it were, at the summit of eternity

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Wilhelmsen's article helps us see the importance of understanding Fabro's proposal of resolution and how it is intertwined with his theory of participation and *esse*. The contrast Wilhelmsen makes between Gilson's "judgment approach" and Fabro's "participation approach" has been highlighted several times over the last decades by a number of Thomists[211]. In synthesis, Fabro's article re-affirms the role of a resolution of act from accidents to *actus essendi* and a (subsequent) reduction to foundation of participated *esse* to *Ipsum Esse Subsistens*. The three principles characteristic of the argument of the Fourth Way and Creation – the emergence of act, separated perfection and participation – are also mentioned.

(*in arce aeternitatis*). Hence God, as pure *esse*, is the grounding Act that is ever present in all acts, the present that actuates every presence. Likewise, God is the first and total cause, and he is at once both transcendent and immanent. He is transcendent but in a way quite different from a Platonic idea; similarly he is immanent but in a manner different from that of the Aristotelian act. He is immanent in the sense that he is the actuating, grounding principle of being, and not merely something accidentally contained in it. He is transcendent as the emerging incomparable act that is beyond all space, time, and measurement, for he is all in himself and all things are in him, from him and for him. In other words, he is the being whom all men have called God".

[211] See G. LINDBECK, "Participation and Existence in the Interpretation of St. Thomas", *Franciscan Studies* 17 (1957) 1-22 and 107-125; F. WILHELMSEN, "Existence and *Esse*", *The New Scholasticism* 50 (1976), 20-45; C. GIACON, "S. Tommaso e l'esistenza come atto: Maritain, Gilson, Fabro", *Medioevo* 2 (1975), 1-28. Also in C. GIACON, *Itinerario tomistico*, La Goliardica, Roma 1983, 137-165; H. JOHN, "The Emergence of the Act of Existing in Recent Thomism", *International Philosophical Quarterly* 2 (1962), 595-620; A. DALLEDONNE, "L'autentico "esse" tomistico e l'equivoco neoscolastico sulla "esistenza come atto" in Carlo Giacon, *Divus Thomas* 80 (1978), 68-82; L. Romera, *Pensar el ser. Análisis del conocimiento del 'Actus essendi' según C. Fabro*, Peter Lang, Bern 1994, 113-118; A. ROBIGLIO, "Gilson e Fabro - Appunti per un confronto", *Divus Thomas* (Bologna) 100 (1997), 59-76; B. MONDIN, "La conoscenza dell'essere in Fabro e Gilson", *Euntes Docete* 50 (1997), 85-115; W. HANKEY, "From Metaphysics to History, from Exodus to Neoplatonism, from Scholasticism to Pluralism: the Fate of Gilsonian Thomism in English-speaking North America", *Dionysius* 16 (1998), 157-188; A. CONTAT, "Le figure della differenza ontologica nel tomismo del novecento", *Alpha Omega* 11 (2008), 77-129.

2.3 The new problem of being and the foundation of metaphysics (1974)

Fabro's article, "*Il nuovo problema dell'essere e la fondazione della metafisica*" is one of his best confrontations of the positions of Heidegger and Aquinas; it is divided into four parts. We have already looked at the first part and Fabro's commentary on the three stages of the progress of metaphysical thought; part two of the article considers the point of departure or "beginning"; part three, the "Transcendental deduction of Thomistic *ens*"; part four, the real distinction of *essentia* and act of being. With respect to the convergence between Heidegger and Aquinas, Fabro writes:

> We are not dealing so much with a doctrinal accord between Heidegger and St. Thomas, with cannot be had on any point, as with a convergence of thematic instances and a basic problematic […]. We are dealing with, if the formula works, a convergent divergence or divergent convergence which stimulates, in our opinion, a confrontation of extreme tension for a positive dialectic between Heidegger and St. Thomas: convergence of instances, divergence of perspectives – rather than formulas, it is the problems themselves that should guide the confrontation[212].

Fabro does not agree with Heidegger's inclusion of St. Thomas within the forgetfulness of being characteristic of the Western philosophical tradition. A confrontation between Heidegger and St. Thomas can be begun only by grasping the "distance" between St. Thomas and the Scholastic tradition. One of the major divergences between St. Thomas and Heidegger is found in the latter's refutation of causal dependence[213].

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[212] C. FABRO, "Il nuovo problema dell'essere e la fondazione della metafisica", 475-476. Fabro then repeats in large part the four points of convergence we saw earlier: "In fact, we can say that both "think to return"; namely, they follow the regressive method of "returning to the foundation" (*Rückgang in den Grund*) which is proper to the essential thinkers. Both see this foundation in the reduction to being, namely, by means of the illumination of *ens* or being in being [*essente nell'essere*]. In both the (knowledge of) the truth of being precedes the (knowledge of) causal dependence namely, they do not identify reality (existence) with effectuality and do not found reality on causality. Consequently, both refute the (modal) distinction of *essentia* and *existentia* and consider it the principal responsible for the forgetfulness of being and the absolute voluntarism of Western nihilism".

[213] See C. FABRO, "Il nuovo problema dell'essere…", 479: "To speak of a 'concordance' between St. Thomas and Heidegger doesn't make sense, nor even for Hegel, Kant, Spinoza and whatever other modern philosopher: those who have

As we have seen, the first part of the article contrasts Heidegger's interpretation of the history of metaphysics as a forgetfulness of being with St. Thomas's interpretation of it as an advance toward the discovery of the truth of the being of beings in three main stages (I, q. 44, a. 2; *De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 5; *De substantiis Separatis*, ch. 9). In terms of convergence, Fabro affirms: "What results, above all, from this first step in the confrontation is the convergence of St. Thomas and Heidegger according to a type of intensive-regressive method, insofar as one and the other see in their predecessors, along with the lacunae, the ascending presence of their 'own' speculative principle (*esse* as primary founding act for St. Thomas, *Sein* as presence of the present for Heidegger)"[214]. At the same time, this convergence contains a divergence: St. Thomas refers *ens* to its principles by stages and *esse* becomes the "act of the pure form"; Heidegger only knows the opposition between being and nothing and identifies *Sein* with appearance and *Nichts* with disappearance. Heidegger and St. Thomas thus interpret *ens-esse* in a diametrically opposed fashion: for St. Thomas *esse* emerges over form and *ens*; for Heidegger, there is only a type actuation in the temporal event.

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tried, have been able to do so minding only the terms of a being-*ens* but omitting the fundamental accusation in which Heidegger includes, to blame as we will see, St. Thomas with the entire Western philosophical tradition: the forgetfulness of being due to the distinction of *essentia* and *existentia*, as we have said. Only showing the distance of St. Thomas from that tradition and the opposition that that tradition has had toward St. Thomas, can one open up the passage to such a confrontation: a confrontation, as we have said, of diverging-convergence, of convergence in the radicality of the instances, of divergence just as radical in the speculative prospective. This divergence has its crux in the total refutation on behalf of Heidegger of causal dependence".

[214] C. FABRO, "Il nuovo problema dell'essere…", 481: "St. Thomas moves by referring *ens* to its principles, operating by stages, namely, from the appearing that *ens* presents by means of the accidents in its essential constitution *ut tale ens* (essence as synolon of matter and form, substance and accidents) to the radical constitution of *ens ut ens* (of *essentia* and *esse*). Heidegger, who has brought the modern principle of identity of being and knowing to the radical demand of awareness of presence and absence only knows the opposition of being and non-being (nothing). For this reason, while St. Thomas deepens *esse* to the fundamental and unique act of the pure form itself and of that that is and appears in reality, Heideggerian *Sein* is identified with pure appearance and non-being with disappearance".

In Part Two, Fabro contrasts the two approaches to the beginning or "point of departure". He likens Heidegger's beginning and emphasis on temporality and appearing to Hegel's equating being with nothingness[215]. St. Thomas's semantics of *ens-esse*, Fabro notes, corresponds literally to Heidegger's *Seiende-Sein*. Unlike Hegel and Heidegger, who begin with *Sein* as empty presence, St. Thomas begins with *ens* as the nexus initially grasped by the mind[216]. Even though St. Thomas's first writings attributes this to Avicenna, the dominant background is Aristotle's metaphysics with its *subiectum* of ὂν ᾗ ὂν. *Ens* is at the summit of all concepts, yet should not be reduced to a product of pure, logical abstraction. Even in the text of *De Veritate*, q. 1, a. 1, which could seem to imply a formalistic deduction of *ens*

[215] C. FABRO, "Il nuovo problema dell'essere…", 482-483: "In Heidegger, we have seen, the beginning is made with the plexus 'being is' [*l'essente è*] since 'being appears in being' [*nell'essente appare l'essere*] and thus 'being is the real' [*l'essente è il reale*]. In reality, though, Heidegger agrees with Hegel since that being of the being is identical to non-being and is therefore, by the simple (being of) 'appearing'. When in fact Heidegger proceeds to explain that 'being appears in the being', the essence of being is this pure appearing (*erscheinen*) manifested [*dispiegantesi*] by means of the temporality of the *Dasein* which is man. But while Hegel considers being and nothing as abstract moments (of indeterminateness of immediacy) to be overcome with the recourse (mediation) of the Infinite as foundation and principle which is 'at our backs', for Heidegger being coincides with appearing and non-being with disappearance, it is the principle and the end at the same time *in* time which is without end. For this reason '…being is in finite essence and is manifested only in the transcendence of the human reality (*Dasein*) which is maintained outside of nothing'. For Hegel the beginning is the empty being (of pure appearance) of immediacy and, for this reason, in this his abstraction is identical to nothing: one deals then, here, with an apparent, provisory and didactic beginning, to put it thus, since the real beginning is made with the Absolute and in virtue of the Absolute which 'is behind' the knowing subject and thus gives the "impulse" to the speculative reflection to reach the ultimate foundation. For Heidegger, on the other hand, being is time as the actuating of man in the world: thus, there is only historical, horizontal becoming which is identical to the compresence of being and non-being in the mutual respective conditioning of one another according to the structure of the event (*Er-eignis*), as we have seen. […] For Heidegger, there is no longer – as for any philosopher after the upheaval which idealism has made of Kant, a problem of knowledge distinct from the metaphysical problem: in fact, *Sein und Zeit* is nothing more than a transcendental phenomenological analysis of behavior, in the sense of a complete extra-flexion of subjectivity dissolved in the neutrality of the *es gibt* of the event".

[216] See C. FABRO, "Il nuovo problema dell'essere…", 483.

and over-emphasis of formal content, St. Thomas holds that *ens* is distinct from *res*, in turn making explicit the distinction between act (*esse*) and content (*essentia*). This distinction, Fabro notes, "is placed at the fundament of the structure of metaphysics"[217].

Fabro delves deeper into St. Thomas's theory of *ens* as *primum cognitum* and quotes St. Thomas's *Commentary* on the *Sentences*, which states:

> That which first falls into the imagination of the intellect is *ens*, without which nothing can be apprehended by the intellect, as that which first falls into the *credulitate* of the intellect are the *dignitates* (axioms) and its principal one, contradictories cannot simultaneously be true; hence all other [things] are included in some way in *ens*, *united and indistinct*, as in principle[218].

Fabro draws attention to the phrase, *united and indistinct*, stating that it contains the entire problematic of metaphysics. In light of this, Fabro explains the *additio* to *ens*, using the *De Veritate* text: one thing is the condition (of the concept) of God which is perfect *in se* and cannot receive additions; another is the condition (of the concept) of *ens commune* which is without addition, yet can receive additions: "In the notion of *ens* this condition – without addition – is not included; otherwise one could never make an addition to it, since it would be against its notion; therefore, it is common since in its notion it does not say some addition, but rather an addition can be made to it in order to determine it to a *proprium*"[219]. For example, "*animal commune*" prescinds from the determinations of "rational" and "irrational". In the case of *ens commune*, a basic principle is

[217] C. FABRO, "Il nuovo problema dell'essere…", 484.

[218] *In I Sent*., d. 8, q. 1, a. 3: "Primum enim quod cadit in imaginatione intellectus, est ens, sine quo nihil potest apprehendi ab intellectu; sicut primum quod cadit in credulitate intellectus, sunt dignitates, et praecipue ista, contradictoria non esse simul vera: unde omnia alia includuntur quodammodo in ente unite et indistincte, sicut in principio".

[219] *In I Sent*., d. 8, q. 4, a. 1 ad 1: "Ita quod non sit de ratione ejus quod fiat sibi additio, neque quod non fiat, et hoc modo ens commune est sine additione. In intellectu enim entis non includitur ista conditio, sine additione; alias nunquam posset sibi fieri additio, quia esset contra rationem eius; et ideo commune est, quia in sui ratione non dicit aliquam additionem, sed potest sibi fieri additio ut determinetur ad proprium".

that "*ens non est genus*". Furthermore, *ens non dicit quidditatem, sed solum actum essendi*[220].

Here we see a difference between Heidegger and St. Thomas. For Heidegger, there is only the plexus of *Seiende-Sein*, where *Sein* means presence of *Seiende* and thus its illumination. The concept of *essentia*, for Heidegger, as content of *ens* derived from the ἰδέα, is from the Platonic separatism that Christianity assumed; *existentia* as founded on extrinsic causality, derives from Christian creationism[221]. For St. Thomas, *esse* is the act of *ens* and the emergence of *esse* is valid as the affirmation of the consistency of reality in its immediate presentation as the truth of *ens*. Thus, the semantics coincide, but the meanings of *ens-esse* radically diverge. For St. Thomas, *ens* and *esse* precede and found thought and the actuation of the mind in general. For Heidegger, the being of the human subject is its *ex-istere* as transcending in the world: thus, it can be called ontological immanentism or metaphysical monism. Heidegger stops at *Sein* as appearing and presence which is resolved into the relation (*Bezug*) of man and world[222]. For St. Thomas, *ens* contains a twofold reference to content (essence) and to act (*esse*). While *ens* can be predicated of privations and accidents, it is properly predicated of substance; substance is the proper bearer of *esse*[223]. Unlike Aristotle, for whom the act of the substance was the substantial form, St. Thomas sees *esse* as the fundamental actual

[220] See *In I Sent*., d. 8, q. 4, a. 2 ad 2: "Ad secundum dicendum, quod ista definitio, secundum Avicennam, non potest esse substantiae: substantia est quae non est in subjecto. Ens enim non est genus. Haec autem negatio non in subjecto nihil ponit; unde hoc quod dico, ens non est in subjecto, non dicit aliquod genus: quia in quolibet genere oportet significare quidditatem aliquam, ut dictum est, de cujus intellectu non est esse. Ens autem non dicit quidditatem, sed solum actum essendi, cum sit principium ipsum; et ideo non sequitur: est non in subjecto: ergo est in genere substantiae".

[221] C. FABRO, "Il nuovo problema dell'essere…", 486.

[222] See C. FABRO, "Il nuovo problema dell'essere…", 486-487.

[223] I, q. 5, a. 1 ad 1: "Nam cum ens dicat aliquid proprie esse in actu; actus autem proprie ordinem habeat ad potentiam; secundum hoc simpliciter aliquid dicitur ens, secundum quod primo discernitur ab eo quod est in potentia tantum. Hoc autem est esse substantiale rei uniuscuiusque; unde per suum esse substantiale dicitur unumquodque ens simpliciter"; *In XI Metaph*., lect. 3, n. 2197: "Nam ens simpliciter, dicitur id quod in se habet esse, scilicet substantia"; *In XII Metaph*., lect. 1, n. 2419: "Nam ens dicitur quasi esse habens, hoc autem solum est substantia, quae subsistit".

principle which actuates the substance[224]. As a term, *ens* is both the most common and the most concrete: "*Ens quamvis sit communissimum tamen concretive dicitur*"[225].

In part three of the article Fabro deals with the "transcendental deduction" of Thomistic *ens*; he divides this part according to three instances of the foundation of knowledge: forms or essences, the transcendentals, the first principles.

a) First, Fabro contrasts the abstraction of the content (essence) with the apprehension of *ens*: "Knowledge by abstraction regards the 'content', namely, the essence and it is, thus, a knowledge that demands abstractive reflection, while the apprehension of *ens* is immediate and constitutes the first step in the apprehension of the real"[226]. The former is limited to content present in the abstraction (from the individuals), the latter is a *global* apprehension in the subject's first direct contact with reality: "The knowledge of essence is of a specializing nature and supposes as support and point of departure that of *ens*"[227].

b) Second, Fabro deals with the transcendentals and the role of *conversio ad phantasmata* in the process of knowledge:

> Thus, the *conversio ad phantasmata* constitutes the process of objectivization *in actu exercito* in its fundamental moment, which reveals (and actuates), at the same time, the transcendental structure of the subject of sense and intellect and the structure of the object on its various intentional levels: of *essente* and *esse*, of *essente* and essence, of essence and *esse*, of substance and accidents, of matter and form… according to the entire constitutive intertwining of reality. But here transcendental has the opposite sense of the Kantian: it indicates the dependence of the intelligible on the sensible, of representation on presentation, of the subject on the object[228].

Kant and modern thought begin with *res* and tend to ignore *ens*. We find exactly the opposite in St. Thomas, for whom *unum* comes in third place, after *ens* and *res* and is therefore doubly founded, as content in the constitution of *res* and as act in the presence of the *ens* which is the bearer of *esse*, which is the founding act.

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[224] See C. FABRO, "Il nuovo problema dell'essere…", 487.
[225] *In Boethii De hebdomadibus*, lect. 2.
[226] C. FABRO, "Il nuovo problema dell'essere…", 490.
[227] C. FABRO, "Il nuovo problema dell'essere…", 490.
[228] C. FABRO, "Il nuovo problema dell'essere…", 490.

> Thus, one can say that as the *conversio ad phantasmata* is the way of the transcendental foundation of the truth of the content (*essentia*) of *ens*, so is the correspondence of the property or modes of *ens* (the transcendentals) the way of the clarification of the explicitation and internal growth which the real obtains in the spiritual subject. The *Diremtion* of the transcendentals is not in fact uniform, it, however, implies a distinction (remaining) *within ens*: this means that *ens* is the indispensible and inexhaustible presupposed and fundament, and at the same time, therefore, *ens* is the point of arrival of the determinations as of the richness brought by the transcendentals[229].

The Thomistic "deduction" of the transcendentals comes about by the development of the implicit into the explicit. The first *Diremtion* in this making explicit of the transcendentals is that of *res*, as it expresses the static moment of the content of *ens* and the distinction from the act which is *esse*. In a second moment, *unum* intervenes as the determination of the indivision and integrity of *ens*. *Unum* is founded on the reality of *ens* in act and is found at various levels: unity of essence and *esse*, substance and accidents, matter and form, act and potency… This unity is understood starting from *ens* and in reflection on *ens* as an originary synthetic plexus: "Thus, the plexus of *ens-res-unum* constitutes a triad which is absolute *in se*, which is made present to the subject as the plexus of the static explicitation of the 'foundation': *res* means the reality of the essence which pertains to *ens* and *unum* (with *aliquid*) means the intrinsic character, i.e., the necessary constitutive, of such pertinence at all levels"[230]. Fabro then clarifies the meaning of *additio*:

> St. Thomas, thus, speaks of "addition" in order to indicate that all the other conceptions of the mind are posterior to *ens* and therefore do nothing other than "add" to *ens* in the sense of making one or other "mode" of being clear and therefore we are always dealing with an addition – only notional, as is obvious – which pertains and thus remains intrinsic to *ens* itself which holds the unquestionable primacy of fundament. The *unum* which is the *negatio divisionis in ente*, far from founding *ens*, as in modern thought, is founded on *ens* and means, first of all, *ens* (but) insofar as it is presented undivided *in se*. The "adding", then, in which the function of the Thomistic transcendentals consists, is founded on *ens* and is not founding, it is discovered in the reality of *ens* and not produced[231].

[229] C. FABRO, "Il nuovo problema dell'essere…", 493-494.
[230] C. FABRO, "Il nuovo problema dell'essere…", 494.
[231] C. FABRO, "Il nuovo problema dell'essere…", 494-495.

Fabro concludes the section by summarizing the Thomistic dialectic of the transcendentals in three points, adding the dynamic moment to the foundational and static moments we have already considered:

> 1) The *foundation* and first object of knowledge is *ens* in the strong sense insofar as it expresses the plexus of subject that is content (*essentia*) and act (*esse*): *ens*, therefore, insofar as it bears and contains *esse*. Thus, it bears it and manifests it. *Ens-esse* is thus to be recognized as the intentional plexus of originary pertaining or the *trascendentale fundans*.
>
> 2) The *static moment* or analytical moment of the transcendental is indicated by *res* which expresses the content of *ens* and by *unum* which expresses the intrinsic belonging of the constitutive [principles] to *ens*. The derivation of these first two transcendentals is interior to *ens* and is sustained by *esse*: it is in view of *esse*, i.e., in order to be, that *ens* should have a content (essence) and result from principles which belong to it.
>
> 3) The *dynamic moment* or expansive moment of *ens* with regard to its pertinence to a spiritual subject which is actuated in knowing and willing: here the dialectic of immanence and transcendence is actuated in various manners at the various levels of reflection and action[232].

Fabro's last lines argue that Thomistic *ens* and the Thomistic transcendentals at the antipode of the Suarezian conception, to which Kant and Heidegger make reference.

c) Thirdly, Fabro addresses the theme of our knowledge of the first principles. The most interesting point for our purposes is his argument against what he calls "Kantian Neo-Scholasticism": the position which holds that *esse* is grasped only and properly by means of the copula of judgment. They hold, on the one hand, that the being of *ens* is the formal abstraction of the essence, and as the abstraction of the essence, it is abstracted from existence. On the other hand, they hold that being as act of existence is manifested above all and properly by the copula-function of judgment, which is always resolved into an affirmation (or negation) of being in a direct form with the verb "to be" and in an indirect form with other verbs[233]. This interpretation is in part based on some of St. Thomas's

[232] C. FABRO, "Il nuovo problema dell'essere…", 496-497.
[233] C. FABRO, "Il nuovo problema dell'essere…", 501.

first texts, making *simplex apprehensio* correspond to the grasping of the essence and judgment to the *affirmatio* (or *negatio*) of being[234].

Fabro argues that the problem of the apprehension of *esse* (as *actus essendi*) is not considered (*è fuori causa*) in such texts. First, these texts speak of "ordinary knowledge" and not properly with the apprehension of *ens*. "In the ordinary knowledge of formal abstraction, the essence or *quidditas* is grasped in its objective content, prescinding from existence and from the *esse* which concretely actuates it"[235]. Secondly, "judgment is considered in its purely formal function of synthesis of S and P by means of the copula '*is*'. But S and P can be found on all levels of knowing – not only real, but also possible, fantastic, purely logical…– and the copula *is* always fulfills its function of uniting S and P even when there is nothing which corresponds to this in reality". Thirdly and consequently:

> The being of predication in judgment is purely formal and functional and not real, such that one can predicate being even of that which has no reality or being but is pure negation or privation (*mors est*, *bos non est leo*…). The "quality" of being of the copula depends, then, on the quality (namely, the constitutive reality) of S and P and therefore on the reality of the relation of S and P and here the Aristotelian principle is valid, the one that states that (predicative) being as such does not mean anything. In formal consideration, the seat of truth is judgment which is actuated by means of the copula *is* and therefore the judgment is the operation which is the seat (function) of the predication of being. But the "quality" of the sphere of such being should result beforehand and elsewhere. Thus, St. Thomas writes earlier in the same context: "Since, then, in a thing, there is its quiddity and its *esse*, truth is founded more of the *esse* of the thing than on quiddity, as both the word '*ens*' is taken from *esse* and in this operation of the intellect grasping the *esse* of the thing, as it is by some assimilation to it, is the relation of adequation completed, in which

[234] See *In I Sent*., d. 19, q. 5, a. 1 ad 7: "Cum sit duplex operatio intellectus: una quarum dicitur a quibusdam imaginatio intellectus, quam Philosophus nominat intelligentiam indivisibilium, quae consistit in apprehensione quidditatis simplicis, quae alio etiam nomine formatio dicitur; alia est quam dicunt fidem, quae consistit in compositione vel divisione propositionis: prima operatio respicit quidditatem rei; secunda respicit esse ipsius. Et quia ratio veritatis fundatur in esse, et non in quidditate, ut dictum est, in corp., ideo veritas et falsitas proprie invenitur in secunda operatione, et in signo ejus, quod est enuntiatio, et non in prima, vel signo ejus quod est definitio, nisi secundum quid; sicut etiam quidditatis esse est quoddam esse rationis, et secundum istud esse dicitur veritas in prima operatione intellectus: per quem etiam modum dicitur definitio vera".

[235] C. FABRO, "Il nuovo problema dell'essere…", 502.

> consists the notion of truth. Hence I say, that the very *esse* of the thing is the cause of truth, according to what it is in the cognition of the intellect"[236]. The being of the copula as such has formal (existential) meaning and not real meaning: it affirms, namely, the existence of the relation of S and P, but the copula is in function of the reality of the subject and the relation with the predicate: if this is real, being is real; if it is fantastic or only logical, such will also be the meaning and value of the being of the copula. The two meanings of *esse*, real and logical, are clearly distinct: "*Esse* is said in two ways: in one way it means the act of being; in another it means the composition of the proposition which the soul encounters uniting the predicate to the subject"[237].

Thus, Fabro concludes that at the basis of the varied meanings that being assumes in reflection, we find the real, fundamental meaning of *esse*, which, in turn, is contained in the apprehension of the originary plexus of *ens*.

Part Four of the article concerns the real distinction of *essentia* and *actus essendi* and begins with a critique of modern thought: modern thought resolves the act of being into the relation of belonging-to (*appartenenza*); the classical formula of such a radical loss of being is found in the Scholastic distinction of *essentia* and *existentia* and is the fundament of modern thought, from Descartes to Kant and up to Nietzsche[238]. The true foundation of metaphysics, Fabro argues, needs to be anchored in the plexus of *ens* and the dialectic of the transcendentals:

> Without the real distinction of *essentia* and *esse* – as (of) two real, immanent principles in *ens* itself – the fundament for the distinction between *ens-res* is lacking, namely, of the real concrete and the formal abstract, and between *ens-unum* [*verum*?]-*bonum*, namely, of the indeterminate concrete, the specified concrete by the spiritual subject, i.e., by the knowledge (intellect), and the determined concrete by freedom (will)[239].

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[236] *In I Sent*., d. 19, q. 1, a. 1: "Cum autem in re sit quidditas ejus et suum esse, veritas fundatur in esse rei magis quam in quidditate, sicut et nomen entis ab esse imponitur; et in ipsa operatione intellectus accipientis esse rei sicut est per quamdam similationem ad ipsum, completur relatio adaequationis, in qua consistit ratio veritatis. Unde dico, quod ipsum esse rei est causa veritatis, secundum quod est in cognitione intellectus".

[237] C. FABRO, "Il nuovo problema dell'essere…", 502-503. I, q. 3, a. 4 ad 2: "Esse dupliciter dicitur, uno modo, significat actum essendi; alio modo, significat compositionem propositionis, quam anima adinvenit coniungens praedicatum subiecto".

[238] C. FABRO, "Il nuovo problema dell'essere…", 504.

[239] C. FABRO, "Il nuovo problema dell'essere…", 504.

Heidegger stops at the plexus of *Sein-Seiende* and remains within the tension of the ontic (*Seiende*), ontological (*Sein*) sphere of pure appearance-event. He tries to resolve and found *Seiende* in *Sein*, the empirical plexus of Hegelian immediateness (*Unmittelbarkeit*), in the pure happening of the event[240]. At the same time, even though Heidegger sees the plexus of *Sein-Seiende* in connection with transcendental human subjectivity, he overturns the Hegelian position: Hegel moves from the *Sein* of *Seiende* to Concept (*Begriff*), while Heidegger's *Begriff* would constitute a return to *Seiende*. For Heidegger: "it is the dialectic of the appearing and disappearing of *Seiende* (the ontic plexus) which refers to the (ontological) plexus of *Sein-Seiende* to the more originary (metaphysical?) plexus of *Sein-Nichts*"[241]. For Heidegger, the originary *Diremtion* of *Sein-Nichts*, which supports and founds that of *Sein-Seiende* is unveiled not by processes which are properly cognitive or affective, but thanks to a fundamental impression that he calls "anguish" (*Angst*). For St. Thomas, the *primum quod intelligitur* as positivity *in se* is *ens* insofar as it has *esse*; *esse* is antithesis of nothingness. For Heidegger, *Sein* refers to *Nichts* and *Nichts* is revealed and attested to by anguish. The order is the following: *Seiende – Sein – Nichts – Angst*[242].

In the Thomistic position, such an interchange between *Sein* and *Nichts* is denied by the plexus of *ens-esse* due to the priority of act over potency and of the real over consciousness. Fabro then summarizes the Thomistic, metaphysical progression in three steps. In the first, he re-affirms *ens* as the originary, transcendental plexus of act (*esse*, *actus essendi*) and content (*essentia*)[243].

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[240] C. FABRO, "Il nuovo problema dell'essere…", 504.

[241] C. FABRO, "Il nuovo problema dell'essere…", 505.

[242] C. FABRO, "Il nuovo problema dell'essere…", 505.

[243] C. FABRO, "Il nuovo problema dell'essere…", 506: "*Ens* is the transcendental (concrete) originary plexus which refers to the act of being (*esse*) [and] which is two-fold, as we have seen, namely, as principle of determination of a content and it is the essence and as principle of actuation as such. Namely, the essence is the principle as realized, intrinsic content and *actus essendi* is the principle as realizing, intrinsic act. *Ens* and *esse* certainly pertain to each other – as do *essentia* and *esse* – but not according to a unbreakable and interchangeable correspondence: in this case, one turns the phenomenological plane into the fundamental point of reference, and being is dissolved as the actuation of pure presentation, as the essence of being is made to emerge as Nothing from anguish. The reckless attempt by Heideggerian Scholastics to salvage Heideggerian *Sein* in Thomistic *esse* is a compromise, then, of the point of departure: *Sein-Anwesenheit*, namely, 'presence of consciousness'".

Secondly, unlike the plexus of *essentia-esse*, the plexus of *ens-esse* is not "constitutive". The determination of the plexus of *esse-essentia* is obtained in a reductive, fundamental metaphysical reflection, and determined as act and potency according to the Aristotelian principle of the emergence of act over potency. *Esse*, in turn, is a real, intrinsic act of *ens* and should not, therefore, be reduced to the mere effect of causal dependence[244]. Thirdly, *esse* should not be confused with *existentia*:

> The *esse* of Thomistic *ens* which makes a real composition with *essentia*, is not to be confused, then, with *existentia*. *Existentia*, we affirm with all our strength, is a term that is foreign to the semantics of Thomistic metaphysics: its appearance with the controversy between Henry of Ghent and Giles of Rome (*esse essentiae*, *esse existentiae*) signaled the loss of the revolutionary novelty of Thomistic *esse* and the beginning of the *Seinsvergessenheit*, justly revealed and deplored by Heidegger. *Existentia*, as already mentioned, is a fact, a factual condition, the fact of reality and of realization (causation) of *ens* and it is common, then, both to the essence and to *esse*, to substance and to accidents. In this sense, summarizing the original sin of the speculative deviation of the West, Kant was right in affirming the most serious paradox and absurd that

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[244] C. FABRO, "Il nuovo problema dell'essere…", 507: "2) The primary, Thomistic plexus of *ens-esse* is then, provisory and not constitutive, as it is in Hegel and Heidegger, since it is made explicit in the real couplet of *essentia-esse*. This *esse* is truly taken as realizing principle in the strong sense and dominating therefore, of the essence which is the (contained) realized principle in *ens*: at this metaphysical level of reflection which is able to be called fundamental reductive, *esse* is the act and the *essentia* is the potency. Here, act and potency have the originary Aristotelian meaning which implies the *emergence* of act over potency: the primary instance of this emergence is the real composition-distinction of *essentia* and *esse* which expresses according to St. Thomas the ultimate and fundamental sense of the 'ontological difference' between *ens* and *esse* and, in the end, between the creature and the Creator. Therefore, Heidegger errors when he likens St. Thomas to the Scholastics who understand *esse* as *existentia* and reduce it, thus, to causal dependence. *Esse* is immanent to *ens* as real intrinsic act to the concrete essence which is, thus, its real *potency*: their interchangeable presence and originary belonging is (in agreement) with creation. But the *esse* of which one speaks is not the simple causal dependence but rather its effect that remains intrinsic to *ens*, such that *essential* which is in composition with *esse* is not the simple possible – which Heidegger with Hegel interprets as nothing – but is the real content of *ens*. This is an absolutely original position fought against and abandoned by Scholasticism and ignored by Heidegger".

> "…being is not a real predicate". For St. Thomas, on the other hand, every reality of truth, life, beauty, goodness… comes to a head in the *esse* of *ens* as primary and fundamental act which is both absolute immanence (*actus essendi* of *ens – esse per participationem*, *esse commune* of the creature) and absolute transcendence (*esse purum*, *per essentiam* = God)[245].

The real distinction of *essentia* and *esse* is the key to the speculative originality of Thomism and the only radical response to the Heideggerian demand of the "ontological difference" for the unveiling of the being of *ens* which Heidegger, coherent with his immanentism, confesses is linked to the temporal plexus of the event:

> In conclusion: the radical problem on the historical as well as speculative plane for the foundation of metaphysics is that brought up by Heidegger, the recovery of *esse* as fundamental act, but not in the way of Heidegger, namely, as "presence of the present" which is the subjective, historical presenting within and by means of time and therefore of simple presence of (and as) *existentia*. *Esse* is the presence of the profound metaphysical act as first participation in the absolute actuality, immanent to (finite) essence, thanks to which *Esse per essentiam* itself which is God becomes immanent to the finite "by essence, by power and by presence" (I, q. 8, a. 1 – a. 4)[246].

* * *

Although principally focused on the confrontation of Heidegger and St. Thomas, Fabro's article confirms several important points regarding his thought on the method of metaphysical reflection: 1) The convergence of Heidegger and St. Thomas on the radicality of *esse* (*Sein*) and the determination of the task of metaphysics as a *resolutio ad fundamentum*. The authors diverge as regards the ultimate fundament and the way this resolution-reduction is accomplished. For Heidegger the path is beings-being-nothingness-anguish (*Seiende-Sein-Nichts-Angst*); for St. Thomas the path moves from *ens* to *esse* and *ens* is ultimately founded on *esse* as intrinsic, participated act (in the creature) and *Ipsum Esse Subsistens* (Creator). 2) Fabro contrasts Heidegger's historiography (forgetfulness of *Sein* from Parmenides onward) with St. Thomas's (three progressive stages from the determination of the distinction between accidents and substance to the consideration of *ens qua ens* and the universal cause of being). St.

[245] C. FABRO, "Il nuovo problema dell'essere…", 507-508..
[246] C. FABRO, "Il nuovo problema dell'essere…", 510.

Thomas's proposal is more in line with the resolution of act; yet, to some degree, Heidegger's proposal can be modified and adapted to account for the "fall" from Parmenides' εἶναι to Platonic ἰδέα and Aristotelian ὀυσία and the "fall" from Thomistic *esse* to Scholastic *existentia*. 3) Fabro again presents his arguments against those who maintain that *actus essendi* is grasped in judgment. Fabro's position is more nuanced, distinguishing the "presence" of *esse* in the initial apprehension of *ens*, from the determination of *esse* as *actus essendi* in metaphysical reflection. 4) Finally, Fabro points out that metaphysical reflection must not follow the Scholastics in a purely extrinsic determination of *esse* as *existentia* and keep present the demands of both the intrinsic nature of participated *esse* and *per essentiam* presence of God in creatures.

2.4 Interpretation of act in St. Thomas and Heidegger (1974)

Fabro's 1974 article, "*L'interpretazione dell'atto in s. Tommaso e Heidegger*",[247] deals with the disintegration of Scholasticism and modern thought insofar as this disintegration has the same source: the distinction between essence and *existentia*. While there are no explicit methodological references in the article, several doctrinal points are made. The article is divided into nine untitled paragraphs. The title of the article refers primarily to the content of paragraphs six and seven. Here, I trace the outline of Fabro's argumentation and point out the relevant doctrinal points.

The first four paragraphs reference Heidegger's work and explain Western metaphysical thought as focused on the question of beings (*Seiende*, *essente*, *entia*) instead of being (*Sein*, *essere, esse*): 1) Using Heidegger's work as a reference point, Fabro first explains the distinction between essence and existence as one of the reasons for the loss of the "truth of being" in contemporary thought. This distinction is that between "what is" (*Was-sein*) and "factual being" (*Dass-sein*). 2) Modern philosophy begins with the Cartesian principle: *ego cogito*, *ergo sum*. Knowledge of things and beings is based on the self-knowledge of the human subject as the fundament (*Grund*) of all certainty. Reality is subsequently determined as objectivity, as that which is understand by means of the subject and by it in the sense of that which is projected by it. The reality of that which is real is reduced to representation by means of the subject. This brings about the substitution of metaphysics with anthropology. 3) For Heidegger, the heart

[247] C. FABRO, "L'interpretazione dell'atto in s. Tommaso e Heidegger", in *Tommaso d'Aquino nel suo VII Centenario*, Napoli 1974, 505-517.

of the metaphysical problem is that of the "ontological difference": the relation or distinction of being (*essente*) from being (*essere*). Modern philosophy only questioned *essente* without questioning *essere*; it subordinates being to thought and metaphysics to logic. In the passage from Descartes to Nietzsche, Kant's transcendental subjectivity is of utmost importance; this led to the "unconditioned subjectivity" of Hegel's metaphysics and the "Absolute idea". 4) In the questioning of being as *essente* (τὸ τί ἐστιν), the response concentrates on the *Was-sein* or *Wesen* (the whatness of the thing, the quiddity or essence).

Beginning in paragraph five, Fabro begins to distance himself from Heidegger's over-simplified historiography. 5) For Heidegger, it is superfluous for the Christian to ask, "What is *essente*?"; for the being of the *essente* consists in its being created by God (*omne ens est ens creatum*)[248]. Heidegger's simplified historiography and ignorance of Patristic and medieval thought betrays a closure of his thought within immanence. He makes no reference to the pivotal work of Philo, the Fathers of the Church and the Scholastics to connect Christianity and classical thought. Mention could have and should have been made by Heidegger that "*ens* is not created, composed, dependent… *inquantum ens*, but insofar as it is *finite*, insofar as it 'has' *esse* and is not *esse*, or rather insofar as it is *ens per participationem* and therefore limited which refers *ens per essentiam*, or better said, *esse per essentiam*…"[249]. Heidegger restricts his analysis to the Ockham-Suarez-Kant line and the distinction between *essentia* and *existentia*. Heidegger does not recognize that St. Thomas does not entirely place causal dependence in the transcendental determination of being (*essente*), even though causal dependence pertains to being (*essente*) necessarily – as a consequence of its metaphysical situation and not in a constitutive manner[250]. Fabro concludes that what is lacking in Heidegger is "the speculative notion of the fascinating term of *esse entis* (*Sein des Seienden*) as act, since he has been duped by the Scholastic-modern notion of *existentia*"[251].

6) In paragraph six, Fabro highlights the consequences of Heidegger's extrinsic consideration of the being of *ens* according to causal dependence:

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[248] See C. FABRO, "L'interpretazione dell'atto in s. Tommaso e Heidegger", 510.

[249] C. FABRO, "L'interpretazione dell'atto in s. Tommaso e Heidegger", 511.

[250] See C. FABRO, "L'interpretazione dell'atto in s. Tommaso e Heidegger", 511. See I, q. 44, a. 1 ad 1.

[251] C. FABRO, "L'interpretazione dell'atto in s. Tommaso e Heidegger", 512.

"The priority of causality over *esse* is at the root of the equivocation of the plexus of *essentia-existentia* of Anti-Thomistic Scholasticism and within this equivocation modern thought moves, overturning the producing subject: while for Scholasticism it is God the Creator, for modern thought the creator is the human subject who knows and wills"[252] . Heidegger traces this equivocation in his analysis of the transformation of Aristotelian ἐνέργεια into *actualitas* in the Western, metaphysical tradition. Fabro concludes the paragraph by pointing out how Heidegger overlooks St. Thomas:

> The Platonic idea, Heidegger explains, becomes *idea* and this (becomes) representation (*Vorstellung*). Likewise, ἐνέργεια (Aristotelian) becomes *actualitas* and this (becomes) reality effectuality (*Wirklichkeit*) – *actualitas* and then becomes a synonym of *existentia*. Yet *existentia* is *ex-istentia*, i.e., *ex-sistere*, to-be-outside or thrown-out. Heidegger is right that the plexus *actualitas-existentia* does not render the meaning of energeia. It is also true that in the cultural history of the West, being conceived as *actualitas* is the basis on which its metaphysics has been built insofar as this rests on the distinction of *essentia-existentia*: *actualitas* as *existentia* is distinct from *essentia* which is conceived as *potentia* in the sense of *possibilitas*. Here, Heidegger switches – and the switch shows he is not the least bit aware of the metaphysical abyss which divides St. Thomas from the (objective) formalism of Scholasticism and from the (subjective) formalism of modern thought – *actualitas* with *actus*, the abstract with the concrete. Aristotle certainly speaks of the concrete act which is the form and also St. Thomas, who elevates to *esse* as *actus essendi* which is the act of all acts[253].

7) In paragraph seven, Fabro summarizes what should be accepted and corrected in Heidegger's thesis regarding the forgetfulness of being. Heidegger's work constitutes a powerful stimulus for the return to fundament; yet "his analysis moves with the horizon of Greek-Scholastic formalism of *actualitas-existentia* alone: he does not know the notion of Thomistic *actus essendi* which overturns and deepens in the notion of participation and has its fulcrum in the real composition of *essentia* and *esse* of finite *ens* which is at the antipode of the (modal) Scholastic distinction of *essentia* and *existentia* as *possibilitas* and *realitas*"[254]. Heidegger determines

[252] C. FABRO, "L'interpretazione dell'atto in s. Tommaso e Heidegger", 513.
[253] C. FABRO, "L'interpretazione dell'atto in s. Tommaso e Heidegger", 513-514.
[254] C. FABRO, "L'interpretazione dell'atto in s. Tommaso e Heidegger", 514.

esse as *esse actu*, thus also confusing *esse* with *existere* like formalistic Scholasticism. In contrast:

> For St. Thomas, *esse* is the actual principle of *ens* which comes into real composition with *essentia* which, for this reason – with respect to the *esse* that actuates it – descends to the rank of potency, not in the formalistic sense of *possibilitas* as even Heidegger continues to write, but to real content of *ens* which is, thus, in act by its own *actus essendi*. Thus, the participated *esse* of the creature is not called *esse actu* (ablative case) – this is *actualitas* as *existential* – but *esse* (*ut*) *actus* in the nominative case. That finite *ens* be caused, created that is, this – as we have seen – is an ulterior step of metaphysical reflection and should be founded for St. Thomas on the intrinsic belonging – as Heidegger himself correctly desires – of *esse* to *ens*[255].

8) Paragraph eight considers the problem of freedom. 9) Paragraph nine concludes the article and the confrontation of Heidegger with St. Thomas: Heidegger and Thomas converge in the radicality of the instance of being and in the task of reduction to foundation of being itself; they diverge in the meaning (sense) to be given to the foundation: Heidegger, stimulated by the Scholastic, modern plexus of *essentia-existentia* falls into the conception of being as pure presence. St. Thomas, on the other hand, based on a reinterpretation of Parmenidean εἶναι, which hinges on the notion of participation, starts from ὄν, which is revealed as the concrete plexus of *essentia* and *esse* in the originary sense of *actus essendi*, and can bring *esse*, as *actus omnium actuum*, to its foundation[256].

* * *

In this brief article, it is important to note the more critical attitude taken towards Heidegger's historiography which is characterized as "over-simplified" and ignorant not only of the originality of Thomistic speculation but also of Philo, the Fathers of the Church and the Scholastics. Secondly, Fabro also critiques Heidegger's doctrinal proposal as it insists on the connection between *existentia* and causal dependence and forgets that the Thomistic notion of participated *esse* includes both the extrinsic moment (causal dependence) and the intrinsic moment (immanent, actuating act) and, in this way, is open to its transcendental foundation.

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[255] C. FABRO, "L'interpretazione dell'atto in s. Tommaso e Heidegger", 515.

[256] See C. FABRO, "L'interpretazione dell'atto in s. Tommaso e Heidegger", 516-517.

2.5 *La svolta antropologica di Karl Rahner* (1974)

Fabro's volume on Karl Rahner is divided into two parts: the first considers Rahner's identification of being and knowing; the second deals with speculative consequences of this identification. Although the work brings out many important points, I will limit my exposition to Fabro's thought on *ens* as *primum cognitum*.

For Rahner, the point of departure of metaphysics is man himself, and this is due to an originary unity of being and knowing, of being and being known[257]. Fabro notes that the obscurity of Rahner's position, which holds that we do not understand what the being of beings is, stems from the obscurity of his starting point for metaphysics. For Fabro, metaphysics does not begin immediately with the question of the being of beings but rather with *ens* as such. It does not begin with something obscure, indeterminate, and empty (Heglian *Sein*, for example), but with the intelligible plexus of *ens* as that which has *esse*[258].

Fabro opposes the Rahnerian identification of being and knowing, by first recalling the proportional (and not direct) correspondence between the formal-logical order and the real-metaphysical order as well as the structural link between predicamental and transcendental participation[259]. Fabro argues that the relationship of genus and species does not reveal the unity of being (as Rahner holds), but rather its *Diremtion* and refers to the real compositions of matter and form (and essence and *esse*) as foundation[260].

Rahner's notion of being seems to remain exclusively on a horizontal-immanent level and is actuated for man in the form of *conversio ad phantasmata*, which is for Rahner identical to the process of abstraction, which in turn is founded on the return (*reditio*) of the subject to himself (*in seipsum*)[261]. Consequently, the beginning, essence and foundation of metaphysical reflection, for Rahner, is found in presenting the being of being (*essere dell'ente*) to man insofar as this is "the actuating of the knowing subject as interpretation and interchangeable belonging (foundation) of sensibility and intellect"[262]. Sensibility is not understood by Rahner as the *quantitas* of representation according to the dynamic of the

[257] See C. FABRO, *La svolta antropologica*..., 24.
[258] See C. FABRO, *La svolta antropologica*..., 24.
[259] See C. FABRO, *La svolta antropologica*..., 28-29.
[260] See C. FABRO, *La svolta antropologica*, 30.
[261] See C. FABRO, *La svolta antropologica*, 32.
[262] C. FABRO, *La svolta antropologica*, 33.

plexus of space and time[263]. This plexus has the Kantian transcendental function of making possible the presence of the world, namely the horizon of being. Rahner's metaphysics, then, is not configured as a study of being as being, but rather as an investigation of the transcendental conditions for the appearing of every being to human consciousness. Man is formally spirit, for Rahner, by means of his openness to the being of the world. In this way, being is questionability, being and knowing are the same thing. According to Fabro, Rahner places *verum* as the foundation of *ens* and identifies it with the very *esse* of *ens*. For Aquinas, *ens* precedes *verum*, while metaphysics resolves act into act and moves toward the fundamental act that is *esse* as *actus essendi*[264].

Rahner is seen to identify apprehension with abstraction, and, due to his unification of sensibility and intellect, places the beginning of knowledge in the synthesis of judgment. Aquinas, on the contrary, begins knowledge with the composite apprehension of the dialectical plexus of *ens*. The notion of *ens* is not posterior to the knowledge of particulars, but rather precedes them as foundation. Rahner's being is the anticipation of the transcendental connection, and stems from transcendental subjectivity. What Rahner is at pains to avoid in his proposal is the nominalistic-Suarezian position of the material singular as *primum cognitum* and the idea of being as terminus of abstractive processes[265]. However, Rahner goes to the other extreme of positing a foundational pre-comprehension in reflexive knowledge in connection to his empty formal-functional notion of being. Through a reduction to fundament of judgment, Rahner's being appears as a formalization of the copula "is" in a judgment. While Rahner reduces being to the subjective activity of consciousness, Aquinas begins with the plexus of the real in act: *ens* as *id quod habet esse*.

After offering textual evidence for Rahner's misinterpretation of Aquinas, Fabro concludes the volume with an excursus that includes a brief summary of his position on *ens* as *primum cognitum*[266]: the *primum cognitum* is a synthetic transcendental plexus which precedes all other knowledge and is the plexus on which all other knowledge is founded; the apprehension of *ens* is the fundament of the apprehension of the transcendentals, the first principles and all judgments; *ens* along with the first principles and not *esse* is the proper object of metaphysics.

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[263] See C. FABRO, *La svolta antropologica*, 33.
[264] See C. FABRO, *La svolta antropologica*, 34.
[265] See C. FABRO, *La svolta antropologica*, 39.
[266] See C. FABRO, *La svolta antropologica*, 142-143.

2.6 Summary

Several recurring themes are present in Fabro's works from the 1970s, which we can summarize as follows:

1) Reduction to fundament: In his confrontations between Heidegger and St. Thomas, Fabro takes an increasingly critical stand towards both Heidegger's historiography and Heidegger's proposal. The principal convergence between Heidegger and St. Thomas regards their views on the "radicality" of *esse* (*Sein*) and the determination of the task of philosophy-metaphysics as that of a "reduction to fundament".

2) Resolution of act: Fabro clearly refers to the method of Thomistic metaphysics as a resolution of act and a reduction of participated *esse* to *Ipsum Esse Subsistens*. Fabro's *resolutio* is equated with "analysis" and spoken about principally in terms of a resolution of act. The resolution of act moves from accidental acts and forms to substantial act and form and concludes by determining *esse* as *actus essendi*. The reduction of participated *esse* to *Esse per essentiam* is only briefly mentioned in these articles without any further specification. At times, resolution is simply referred to as the metaphysical itinerary from *ens* to determination of *esse*, the act by which something is called "*ens*". At other times it is used in a technical, Thomistic sense: "[*Esse* as *actus essendi*] has been discovered by the strictly metaphysical method of resolution or reduction (*per resolutionem* or *per reductionem*), as Aquinas often calls it, of accidental predicamental acts to substantial form and of both accidental and substantial acts to the more profound substantial act which is *esse*. It has also been discovered by the method of the absolute reduction of the act of being by participation to the *esse per essentiam*"[267].

3) *Ens* as *primum cognitum*. Another dominant theme during this period is the role of *ens* as *primum cognitum*. *Ens* is grasped initially in an apprehension, not an abstraction. The consideration of finite *ens* leads the metaphysician to the determination that "*ens participat esse*". Only by means of "reflection" on *ens* as a synthetic plexus (which is initially obtained in a direct, immediate apprehension) does a distinction between content and act emerge. Within *ens* there is a dialectic, a composition of essence (content) and *esse* (act). One comes to *esse* through a process of resolution of act to act: from accidental acts and forms to *actus essendi*.

4) Fabro continues his arguments presented in *PC* against those who sustain that *esse* is grasped in judgment. He argues that there are cases in

[267] C. FABRO, "The Intensive Hermeneutics…", 486.

which the copula "*est*" merely functions as a unification of S and P, even when there is nothing which corresponds to this *in re*. Fabro holds that the being of predication in a judgment is primarily formal and functional and, therefore, not real; the quality the being of the copula depends of the quality of S and P and their relationship. For Fabro, the being of the copula primarily has a formal (existential) meaning and a not real meaning: it normally affirms the existence of the relation of S and P. Thus, the copula depends on the reality of the subject and its relation with the predicate: if this subject and relation are real, we are dealing with real being; if they are "fantastic" or only logical, such is the meaning and value of the being of the copula. St. Thomas's texts, Fabro notes, clearly distinguish between real and logical *esse*.

5) Finally, it should also be pointed out that Fabro's metaphysical work during this decade is limited to the years immediately leading up to and including the celebration of the 700th anniversary of Aquinas's death (1974). If we take into consideration that Fabro's last major metaphysical articles from the 1960s are from 1967 and that Fabro does not publish extensively on Thomistic metaphysics again until 1983, we are dealing with a fifteen year span in which he publishes no more than five or six articles on themes related to Thomistic metaphysics[268]. Along with his focus on the problem of atheism and freedom, the reason for this hiatus can probably be traced to a certain disillusionment in the period immediately following the Second Vatican Council[269]. With the combination of the beginning of John Paul II's pontificate and the 100th anniversary of *Aeterni Patris*, Fabro once again returns to the theme of the originality and emergence of Thomistic *esse*[270].

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[268] In addition to the four articles we considered, see also C. FABRO, "Platonism, Neoplatonism, Thomism", *The New Scholasticism* 44 (1970), 69-100 and "Il trascendentale esistenziale e la riduzione al fondamento. La fine della metafisica e l'equivoco della teologia trascendentale", *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana* 52 (1973), 469-516.

[269] C. FABRO, "Attualità della contestazione tomistica", *Doctor Communis*, 28 (1974), 3-12.

[270] C. FABRO, "Tomismo e rinnovamento della Chiesa nel mondo contemporaneo", *Seminari e teologia* 4 (1979), 5-8; "L'antropologia teologia" in *Giovanni Paolo II. Il Redentore dell'uomo*, Logos, Roma 1979, 37-50; "San Tommaso davanti al pensiero moderno" in *Le ragioni del tomismo*, Ares, Milano 1979, 50-59; "Tomismo essenziale e crisi dei tomismi. Nel primo centenario dell'Enciclica *Aeterni Patris*", *Renovatio* 15 (1980), 81-102; "Significato e missione ecclesiale di S. Tommaso d'Aquino nel magistero di Giovanni Paolo II",

In the 1970s, Fabro often attempted a speculative-theoretical confrontation between Hegel, Heidegger and St. Thomas and explanation of their methodological convergences and doctrinal divergences. With regard to method, Fabro often refers to the Hegelian-Heideggerian project of a *reductio ad fundamentum*. The influence of modern and contemporary German thought can be seen somewhat in Fabro's adoption of some Hegelian-Heideggerian terms. Five terms, in particular, stand out. The first is that of "*Anfang*" (beginning, starting-point) which Fabro translates into Italian as "*cominciamento*"[271]. A second term is the Hegelian term "*Aufhebung*" which means an "overturning-synthesis". Fabro uses it to characterize the overturning-synthesis accomplished by St. Thomas with respect to Platonic and Aristotelian thought[272]. A third term is that of "*Anwesen*" (presence): Fabro uses it when speaking about the initial presence of *ens* to the mind and in the mind, and the presence of *esse* to the mind[273]. A fourth term, "*Diremtion*", was dealt with earlier in Chapter One (4.4) and, as used by Fabro, means an originary "separation-division-distinction-difference". Finally, the term "*Grund*" is used in connection with the methodological convergence between Hegel and St. Thomas regarding the need to "return to the fundament of metaphysics" (*der Rückgang in den Grund der Metaphysik*). In each case, Fabro purifies the original meaning and context to some degree so as to avoid unintended doctrinal consequences.

3. Metaphysical reflection (1980-1995)

To conclude this overview of Fabro's works on the method and structure of metaphysical reflection, I look at six works that pertain to the period 1980-1995: an article on the emergence of the act of being in St. Thomas (3.1); Fabro's thirty-five theses in *Introduzione a san Tommaso* (1983) which speak about the relationship of participation and the emergence of *esse* (3.2); his article on Maritain and our apprehension of *ens* (3.3); an article on the search for the foundation of metaphysics (3.4); and

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Ecclesia Mater 18 (1980), 36-42; "Il significato e i contenuti dell'Enciclica *Aeterni Patris*", in *Atti dell'VIII Congresso Tomistico Internazionale*, I, Roma 1981, 66-68.

[271] See C. FABRO, *La prima riforma della dialettica hegeliana*, 11-19 and 211-242.

[272] See C. FABRO, "Platonism, Neoplatonism, Thomism: Convergencies and Divergencies", *The New Scholasticism* 64 (1970), 94.

[273] See C. FABRO, "Il ritorno al fondamento…" (1973), 265-278.

his final article on the emergence of Thomistic *esse* over Aristotelian act (3.5). These contributions are rounded off with a 1991 conference in which Fabro spoke about the originality and emergence of *esse* (3.6).

3.1 The emergence of the act of being in St. Thomas (1983)

The article, "L'emergenza dell'atto di essere in S. Tommaso e la rottura del formalismo scolastico" (1983), was used by Fabro to summarize one of the three main lines of his thought in "Appunti di un itinerario" (1984)[274]. The article is divided into four sections: 1) The intensive dialectic of the notion of participation; 2) The thematic expansion of the metaphysics of participation; 3) The intensive hermeneutics of Thomistic philosophy: the notion of participation; 4) The transcendental emergence of *esse* in *ens*. Since the first three sections do not present substantial novelties in Fabro's thought, we will look solely at Section four, which contains some insights for our investigation.

Section Four of the article begins by asking how *esse* as *actus essendi* – which is participated in the finite and *per essentiam* in God – is known and what *esse* is. Fabro observes, however, that in the authentic Thomistic position, these two problems do not exist for the simple reason that St. Thomas proposes beginning with *ens* and not with *esse* (as did the Scholastics, moderns, Rahner and the followers of Rahner)[275]. Thus, the itinerary that St. Thomas follows in the foundation of metaphysics does not begin with the infinite verb *esse*, but rather with the participle *ens*, which has a threefold concreteness: 1) The concreteness of first act insofar as *ens* is the participle of *esse* and indicates being-in-act in an absolute way; 2) The founding concreteness of every other act or verb; 3) The concreteness of the "realizing" priority which is demanded by the *esse* of *ens* insofar as in order to operate something must first "be"[276]. At this point, the founding priority of *esse* (and *ens*) with respect to every other act (and subject-in-act) emerges.

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[274] C. FABRO, "L'emergenza dell'atto di essere in S. Tommaso e la rottura del formalismo scolastico", in *Il concetto di "Sapientia" in san Bonaventura e san Tommaso*, Officina di Studi Medievali, Palermo 1983, 35-54. The text was first presented in October 1981. Reprinted in "Appunti per un itinerario", in *Essere e libertà. Studi in onore di Cornelio Fabro,* Maggioli Editore, Rimini 1984, 19-42.

[275] C. FABRO, "L'emergenza dell'atto di essere…", 50.

[276] See C. FABRO, "L'emergenza dell'atto di essere…", 51.

Fabro recalls the priority of *ens* as the *primum cognitum* of the intellect and its foundational role with respect to all other notions, as well as the fact that something is intelligible to the degree it is in act and that *ens* is in act by virtue of *esse* as *actus essendi*. In this regard he quotes *De Causis*: "*Ens* means that which participates in *esse* in a finite way and this is proportioned to our intellect whose object is that-which-is as is stated in *De Anima*, Book III. Hence, only that which has a quiddity participating in *esse* is understandable by our intellect"[277]. In light of this text, a problem arises: "Is our intellect limited to the knowledge of essences?" Fabro responds that St. Thomas earlier states that all intellectual or rational knowledge is of beings (*entium*) and that *ens* is what our intellect first acquires. Thus, whatever does not include the *ratio entis* is not understandable by the intellect[278]. Thus, the intelligibility of every created reality *insofar as it is real* depends on the primary intelligibility of *ens*:

> But *ens* has *esse* for its act, which, just as it makes the essence be in act, so also does it make it present to the created intellect insofar as it is *ens* (i.e., insofar as it is real): the *ratio entis*, then, is the principle of intelligibility and of both subjective and objective truth, both with respect to things to be understood or known and with respect to us in order to permit consciousness to know them as they are *in se*. Thus, the plexus of *ens*, which was for the Platonism of Proclus and of Pseudo-Dionysius, the limit and the fracture for the knowledge of the First Cause, becomes in St. Thomas the key to knowledge and the glimmer [*spiraglio*] to ascend to the first Cause by means of the purifying process of analogy[279].

Fabro specifies three moments in the (analogical) ascending movement from the plexus of *ens* to the First Cause: "Three seem, then, the crucial moments of Thomistic speculation on participation in the relation of finite-Infinite, of creature-Creator: the participation of *structure* (*ens per participationem – Esse per essentiam*); participation of *causality* (predicamental and transcendental) and semantic participation (predicamental univocity and

[277] *In Librum De Causis*, lect. 6: "Ens autem dicitur id quod finite participat esse, et hoc est proportionatum intellectui nostro cuius obiectum est quod quid est ut dicitur in III de anima, unde illud solum est capabile ab intellectu nostro quod habet quidditatem participantem esse".

[278] *In Librum De Causis*, lect. 6: "Omnis cognitio intellectualis vel rationalis est entium: illud enim quod primo acquiritur ab intellectu est ens, et id in quo non invenitur ratio entis non est capabile ab intellectu".

[279] C. FABRO, "L'emergenza dell'atto di essere…", 53.

metaphysical analogy)"[280]. These three moments are the same as those mentioned in the conclusion of *PC* and confirm our reading: structure, causality, analogy[281].

3.2 The emergence of *esse* in Fabro's Thomistic theses (1983)

Fabro's 1983 edition of *IST* offers a set of thirty-five "New Theses"[282] which articulate what Fabro considers the essential content of St. Thomas's metaphysics. While the *substance* of the original XXIV Thomistic theses from 1914 remains, Fabro is seeking to free this content from the remnants of "Scholastic rationalism"[283]. Evidence of this is the rationalistic structure of the original theses: general ontology (I-VII), cosmology (VIII-XIV), anthropology (XV-XXI), natural theology (XXII-XXIV).

Fabro's proposal is one of his mature texts and he frequently uses terms and expressions he has developed over the years (for example, emergence, intensive *esse*, noetic plexus, transcendental plexus, dialectic of

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[280] C. FABRO, "L'emergenza dell'atto di essere…", 53.

[281] C. FABRO, "L'emergenza dell'atto di essere…", 53: "Therefore, as there is a *predicamental* participation of constitution: that of the individuals in the species and the species in the genera, there is also a causality of predicamental action: that of nature and of the individual above the individual that comes to being…; likewise and first of all, there is a *transcendental* participation, constitutive of *entia* as plexus of essence as potency and of *esse* as act: a composition which is supported by dynamic participation which is actuated by means of creation and conservation – a transcendental bond that relates all creatures, material and spiritual to *Esse subsistens*. And this dialectic (in order to mention it briefly) is reflected in action where participation moves along [*circola*] this as well, both in the transcendental order of total and simple dependence of *entia* with respect to primordial Being, as also in the predicamental order of dependence on finite and spatio-temporal becoming".

[282] I will quote from and use the numbering of the 1997 second edition of *IST* which has 59 theses in total, adding 15 theses (XXI-XXXV) on the philosophy of nature and 19 theses (LI-LXIX) on the moral order to the original 35 theses.

[283] See C. FABRO, *IST*, 136: "The clear intention of the publication was that of formulating the fundamental principles of Thomistic speculation *in re praesertim metaphysica* which serve as a directive line of teaching: one needs to agree that, even after almost a century of studies and investigations, the substance of these *theses* could remain, on the condition of a radical re-elaboration in order to free them from the heavy residue of Scholastic rationalism. I offer the text in the appendix and have allowed myself to substitute them with my own formulation as a hypothesis for study".

participation, etc…). There are only a few methodological indications given in the theses, yet their ordering and the way one thesis builds on the previous ones given us insight into the structure of Fabro's metaphysical reflection. Fabro's original 35 theses can be grouped as follows[284]:

Theses	Content
I - VII	Structure and composition of finite *ens*: substance-accidents; matter-form; essence-*esse*
VIII - XVII	Initial apprehension of *ens* and foundation of knowledge and the transcendentals
XVIII - XX; XXXVI - XXXVIII	Predicamental and transcendental participation
XL - XLV	Metaphysics of *esse*
XLVI - L	Metaphysical anthropology: *esse* and the soul, *ens* and knowledge

Esse as *actus essendi* is mentioned in the very first thesis, and is continually mentioned as the theses progress. *Esse* is presented: first, as a constitutive principle in an act-potency, compositional-participative relationship with essence; then, as the reason for the noetic priority of *ens*; next, as participated act created by *Esse per essentiam*; and finally as the foundation of the being-in-act and operation of the creature. This progression confirms the quasi-concentric conception Fabro has of the dynamic of metaphysical reflection. In fact, in thesis XLV, Fabro speaks explicitly of the helicoidal (spiral) ascension of metaphysical thought, which, he argues, moves from act to act, founding the formal acts of the essence on *esse* and participated *esse* on *Esse per essentiam*, all of this due to the internal dialectic of act as perfection[285]. In the presentation that follows I offer a translation and explanation of the first 25 of Fabro's original XXXV theses.

1) *Structure and composition of finite ens*. Fabro's first thesis begins by specifying the constitutive principles proper to three orders of reality (operative, essential, entitative) according to the couplet act-potency. Thus, the first metaphysical problem is that of the "structure" or constitution of

[284] J. Méndez has studied the theses extensively. See his "Las tesis de C. Fabro", *Sapientia* 39 (1984), 181-192; and his *Las tesis de Cornelio Fabro*, Pontificia Università Lateranense, Roma 1990.

[285] See C. FABRO, *IST*, 178.

finite *ens*. As we have seen, the articulation of the principles of the three orders is effected by means of a resolution of act, founding accidental forms and acts on substantial form and both of these on *actus essendi*:

> I. Potency and act are the constitutive principles of finite *ens*; potency as receptive capacity, and act as entitative act, in the various orders or planes of reality: prime matter and substantial form in the constitution of material essence, essence and *esse* as *actus essendi* in the entitative order, substance and accidents in the operative order[286].

Fabro's opening lines and initial determination of potency and act as constitutive principles of finite *ens* should not be passed over lightly. Such a determination entails the reflections we saw earlier in *Metaphysica* (*Liber primus*, Chapter Two): in particular, they imply the Aristotelian principle of the emergence of act and the determination of a "real distinction" (a real negation of identity *inter plura*) between act and potency. This first thesis also relies on a distinction of three "orders of reality" and recalls the stages of metaphysics in texts like I, q. 44, a. 2 and *De substantiis separatis*, ch. 9. This first thesis may be considered as the result and conclusion of the first stages of metaphysical reflection and its resolution of act to *esse*.

Fabro's second thesis examines the essence (of spiritual beings) in each of the three orders, determining whether it is simple or composite in these orders:

> II. The essence of spiritual beings is simple in the essential order, since it is constituted by pure form; in the operative order it has the faculties of intelligence and of will at its disposal; in the entitative order – insofar as the created spirit is *in se* finite – it is composed of essence (as potency) and of participated *esse* (as ultimate act); by which, all that exists in the world, both material and spiritual, is called *ens* as that which as *esse* by participation[287].

The thesis evidences how Fabro, by pointing to the finite nature of created beings, draws out the consequence that all finite (limited and imperfect) beings must be composed in the entitative order. In this way, the thesis alludes to Fabro's work on the importance of the participation argument for the real distinction-composition between essence and participated *esse*.

The third thesis affirms the *analogical* nature of the three potency-act compositions in finite *ens*. Potency and act are not "said" or predicated in

[286] C. FABRO, *IST*, 158.
[287] C. FABRO, *IST*, 158.

the same way in each order. The distinction of orders of reality and the analogical nature of act and potency within the compositions allow the same principle to be act in one order and potency in another, and begin to clarify the role of the Aristotelian principle "*forma dat esse*" in St. Thomas's metaphysics of *esse* and participation:

> III. The relationship of potency and act in the three compositions of matter and form, substance and accidents, essence and *esse*, do not have a univocal meaning, but rather an analogous one: prime matter is pure potency, the substance produces its own accidents, and essence gives being. This is because it is by means of the form, which is the constitutive act of the species or nature, that *ens* is enabled to have-receive participated *esse* (*actus essendi*)[288].

Thus, in the *essential* order, prime matter is pure potency and pure capacity to receive form and its act from form. In this case, the act-principle determines the potency-principle. In the *operative* order, the substance is not pure potency, for it produces-determines its accidents and properly has the act of being, in which accidents participate. Likewise the accidents determine the substance as second acts and ulterior perfections. In the *entitative* order, the essence or form is the mediating principle by which an *ens* is determined to receive its *actus essendi*. In this case the potential-principle determines the act-principle.

Thesis IV affirms that *esse* as participated *actus essendi* should be referred to as the "first act" or "primary act" in finite *ens* in all three orders (predicamental, operative, transcendental) and compositions (synolons). *Esse* as act of all acts and perfection of all perfections, is what Fabro refers to as "intensive act":

> IV. The *esse*, i.e., participated *actus essendi*, that with the essence constitutes *ens* in act as transcendental synolon, is thus the first act both of the predicamental synolon of matter and form in bodies, and of the operative synolon of substance and accidents in finite beings and of the transcendental synolon of essence and *esse* (*actus essendi*)[289].

This means that the actuality (being-in-act) proper to form (formal *esse* or existence), substance (subsistence) and accidents (inherence, *inesse*) is founded on the act of being and is due to a participation in this act. Consequently, something is in act to the degree that it participates in the

[288] C. FABRO, *IST*, 159.
[289] C. FABRO, *IST*, 159.

perfection of *esse*, and does not have another "source" for its perfection other than participated *esse*:

> V. Therefore, while in classical thought act indicates the essence and the form, which has no origin and constitutes the proper and first *esse* of material beings and also of intelligent and intelligible beings, in Thomistic thought act pertains first of all and above all to *esse*, such that every form (essence, perfection) has actuality insofar as it participates in *esse*[290].

Here, "classical thought" refers above all to Fabro's interpretation of Aristotle.

For St. Thomas, the operation and action of a finite *ens* are founded on its *actus essendi*, which the substance has by participation. This is one meaning of the principle: *agere sequitur esse*:

> VI. "*Ens*", therefore, is the "primary semantic term", both in the static order (which implies the composition of real essence with *actus essendi*) and in the dynamic order as the primary foundation of the substance in operation, such that the act of operating is by participation in the act of *esse*, which is the first act of the substance[291].

As the participle of *esse*, *ens* indicates reality-in-act. *Esse*, in its intensive meaning, is the act of all acts, while *ens*, in its intensive meaning, is omni-comprehensive and "reigns over" the categorial (substance, accidents…) and transcendental determinations (one, good, true, life, intelligence…):

> VII. "*Ens*" can be said, then, as the participle of *esse*, to be the "totalizing *semantic term*", insofar as it indicates the plexus of reality in its first (fundamental) and ultimate (realized and realizing) concreteness; thus "*ens*" is more concrete than "lion" and "this lion" (Simba), than "man" and "this man" (Andrew): since only *esse* places in act both the essence in its precise characteristic and the individual connotations of the same species. This is the intensive meaning of *ens* which, as the omni-comprehensive, reigns over the other determinations of the real, both categorical (essences) and transcendental (perfections)[292].

2) *Apprehension of ens and foundation of knowledge*. Thesis VIII begins a series of seven theses on our initial apprehension of *ens* and the

[290] C. FABRO, *IST*, 159.
[291] C. FABRO, *IST*, 159.
[292] C. FABRO, *IST*, 159-160.

foundation of knowledge. The theses are fairly self-explanatory in light of what we have seen thus far in Fabro's metaphysical works from 1960-1979:

> VIII. *Ens*, then, insofar as it is the originary semantic term which indicates "that which has the act of being", is the semantic term of the first and ultimate concreteness of reality in act, within which all the other determinations of the real are actuated as its participations. *Ens* is the "transcendental founding" semantic term with respect to any determination of the real: it avoids all logical determination (of genus and species…) insofar as it is not found on the slope of constitutive, formal concepts, but is placed as the first plexus of the first act (*esse*) at the foundation of the reality of all forms and acts that constitute the concrete *in se*, outside of thought and of mere possibility.
>
> IX. *Ens* is the first, originary noetical plexus (*primum cognitum*) which is constitutive of knowledge in the strong sense: i.e., it operates and is presented to the confluence of all the functions of consciousness both cognitive and tendential [*tendenziali*], both sensible and spiritual: for this reason, it transcends both (sensible) intuition and (intellectual) abstraction, since it sustains both. In the semantic term of the plexus *ens* the first structure of essence (*id quod*) and act (*esse*) is distinguished: "*Nomen entis imponitur ab esse, et nomen rei a quidditate*" (*In I Sent*., d. 25, q. 1, a. 4; cf. *Ibid*., d. 8, q. 1, a. 3).
>
> X. *Ens* indicates the whole in act of the real in its ultimate and proper reality in act: *esse* as proper act of *ens qua ens*, that is, insofar as it indicates the real that has overcome both the empty abyss of nothingness as the empty categorial multiplicity of the possible; it is not the act revealed by thought in judgment, but rather the act that is given to thought and that renders active [*operoso*] and operating the actuating itself of thought itself in its original composition [*dirimersi*] of essence and *esse*, and therefore of substance and operations and of subject and perfections.
>
> XI. It is with the apprehension of *ens* as *primum cognitum* (which is the *cognitum fundans trascendentale* as well) that thought makes its beginning and can advance along its path, projecting the diverse forms both of knowledge and action. If on the psychological plan the plexus of *ens* remains wrapped up in confusion due to the indeterminateness of the knowledge of the essence (*quod*), on the real plane *ens* is the first knowable and known in act, and that is both in fact and by right[293].

[293] C. FABRO, *IST*, 160-161.

Theses XII, XIII and XIV establish *ens* as: 1) the *initial*, primary, noetic plexus (XII); 2) the *founding*, primary, noetic plexus (XIII); and 3) the primary *veritative* plexus (foundation of first principles) (XIV):

> XII. The apprehension of *ens*, therefore, is a *prius* which is initial and constitutive at the same time, i.e., it is the object as *transcendental illuminating*: therefore, strictly speaking, cannot be called "determined" or "object" in a proper sense, but rather transcendental objectifying. Only St. Thomas – not Parmenides, who opened the way, not Hegel, who closed it; not Rosmini, who unified the real and the possible in "ideal *ens*"; not Heidegger, who destroyed it – has grasped the founding, cognitive (speculative) priority of the plexus of *ens-esse*[294].
>
> XIII. Consequently, to the plexus of *ens-esse* also belongs the cognitive (speculative) priority which founds: a) all the transcendental notions (one, true, good) which refer to *ens* and depend on it; b) all the other notions which refer to the essence as the proper "content" of *ens* or *quod est*, which is the substance (simple or composed)[295].
>
> XIV. Once the mind is actuated to knowledge by the apprehension of *ens* as the object which places the mind itself in act, *ens* is affirmed in the mind itself on the fundament of *esse* which is its act. Since *esse* is the act of *ens*, *ens*, if it is, must be in act: thus, the actuation of consciousness follows the presentation of *ens* to consciousness. Thus, it is in virtue of the total passivity of consciousness with respect to the positing presentation of *ens* that the presence in act of *ens* itself is imposed on consciousness, and it should affirm it as imposing in an absolute way. It is the principle of non-contradiction, the first principle of knowledge, founded on the initial apprehension of *ens*[296].

Theses XV-XVII deal with the transcendentals: *res-aliquid-unum* (XV), *verum* (XVI) and *bonum* (XVII). With regard to method, Fabro's prefers to speak of an "implication", rather than "deduction" of the transcendentals[297]:

> XV. Therefore, one should not speak of a transcendental "deduction", nor of a transcendental "induction" in Thomas, but rather of a transcendental

[294] C. FABRO, *IST*, 161.
[295] C. FABRO, *IST*, 161-162.
[296] C. FABRO, *IST*, 162.
[297] In his article, "Il nuovo problema dell'essere e la fondazione della metafisica", Fabro speaks of a "transcendental deduction of *ens*", yet clarifies that the term "deduction" should not be understood in a formal, logical (rationalistic) sense.

implication on two levels (or degrees, if you prefer): the absolute plane, with *ens-essentia-aliquid-unum*; and the relative plane, with *verum-bonum*. The absolute attributes regard *ens ut ens*: by being understood as *id quod est*, *id quod habet esse*, should be *in se* something real (*id quod, essentia*), incommunicable determinate (*aliquid*), and thus, one *in se* (*unum*, undivided and indivisible, i.e., unified and compact *in se*. The unification is given by *esse* insofar as it is act of all acts, the most intimate act, the first and ultimate act[298].

XVI. If the grasping of *ens* is the first and fundamental act of knowing, insofar as it gives *esse* and makes it present, *ens* which becomes the object of knowing is "true": true, then, is the intellect that conforms to *ens*, i.e., which attests to the content of *ens* (essence) and the actuality of being (*esse*). The originary and founding principle of the actuation of knowing in the apprehension of *ens* is thus in agreement with the absolute dependence of knowing on the *givenness* [*darsi*] of *ens* itself. Thus, *ens in anima*, *verum*, is derived, i.e., founded on *ens in se* which is *extra animam*. In other words, the *veritas formalis mentis* of man depends on (should be conformed to) the real *veritas entis*[299].

XVII. As convenience (adequation) of the intellect to *ens* constitutes the true, thus convenience of *ens* to the tendential faculty (and especially to the universal tendency of perfect happiness, which is the will) constitutes the *good*. It indicates *ens* insofar as it is perfect and perfective: thus, the first requirement or fundament is that it be real, i.e., that it have *esse*. The good, then, indicates that which is and should be at the summit of the scale of values and expresses the perfection of the real (the object) which is able to perfect the subject: in both moments it is presupposed that it is *ens*, and thus *esse*, the first act of *ens*, is also the act of all perfections: thus, it is called *perfectissimum omnium*, and God is the *ipsum esse* (with this He is also the *Summum Bonum*, as *ultimus finis*). […] It is easy to understand that, in spite of their respective transcendental difference, *verum* and *bonum* belong to one another necessarily: in fact, the true becomes a good, and a founding good, just as the good should be true and not illusory (otherwise it would be a deception and, instead of giving us perfection and bringing us happiness, it damages us)[300].

3) *Predicamental and transcendental participation*. Thesis XVIII begins the series of six theses on participation; this first thesis establishes the distinction between univocal, predicamental participation and analogical, transcendental participation:

[298] C. FABRO, *IST*, 163.
[299] C. FABRO, *IST*, 163-164.
[300] C. FABRO, *IST*, 164-165.

> XVIII. Therefore, *ens* is the real plexus of essence and *esse*: *ens* is something, namely, *this* thing and not another (a horse and not a stone, since it has the essence of horse and not of stone). Thus, the essence as principle of distinction of *entia* implies wherever a limitation of the perfection of *esse*, it is not *esse ipsum* but rather "participates" in being, the first act, the act of all acts. Being-in-act (*esse actu*) is found in reality, to be realized: but before being *such* or *such a nature* (namely a perfection) and this is every determination of the real, "participation" of being. St. Thomas says: "To participate is like taking a part, and therefore when something receives in a particular way that which belongs to another in a universal way it is said to participate in it". The text continues, illustrating *univocal predicamental* participation: "As man is said to participate in animal, since it does not have the notion of animal according to all its community; and in the same way, Socrates participates in man; and in a similar way the subject participates in the accident and matter in form". Shortly afterwards, St. Thomas speaks of *transcendental participation*: "It is impossible that *ipsum esse* participates in something according to the first two modes […]. But *ipsum esse* is most common: hence it is participated in by others, but does not participate in something else" (*In lib. De Hebdomadibus*, lect. 2)[301].

Theses XIX, XX and XXXVI deal with predicamental participation, first with respect to univocal perfections (XIX), then with respect to the triad individual-species-genus and to the principle of formal identity and real diversity (XX), and finally with respect to *esse* (XXXVI).

> XIX. *Predicamental participation* is actuated in the sphere of the univocal perfections, i.e., those perfections which, although presenting themselves diversely in diverse participants, attest to a basic, common nature; for example, the various breeds of horses are of different stature and capacity, but are always horses, and the diversity of stature and capacity pertain to the common equine species. More complex is the univocal participation of man, due to the great richness which man can unfold in the twofold order of his nature, corporeal and spiritual: thanks to his spirituality, man realizes his "participation of emergence" (as pure spirit). St. Thomas writes: "But an individual in the lowest part of the world which contains beings that are subject to generation and corruption is found to be perfect from the fact that it has whatever pertains to itself, according to its own individual character, but not whatever pertains to its own specific nature, since its own specific nature is also found in other individual beings" (*De Spirit. Creat.,* a. 8). "Whatever is predicated univocally of several things belongs by participation to each of the things of which it is

[301] C. FABRO, *IST*, 165.

predicated: for the species is said to participate the genus, and the individual the species" (*Summa contra Gentiles*, I, ch. 32)[302].

XX. Univocal *predicamental participation* attests to the *real* irreducibility of the participants – species to genera, individuals to species… – to the genera or species that regards them: the genus is real in the species insofar as it is realized in the expansion of the species, and still more, the material species are real in the multiplication of the individuals. The genus (for example, animality, and so also for all genera) in the metaphysical sense indicates a plexus of perfections that are divided diversely into various species, which are the various orders of living things which populate the earth in a marvelous progression from vegetables, amebas, protozoa… up to mammals (including man). And in man, insofar as he is an incarnate spirit, and much more so in pure spirits, every subject is diversely endowed and can be realized not only diversely [but also][303] in opposite directions: by truth and error, by good and evil. In predicamental participation, the following principle is valid: in the formal order (of the essence) the participants are all "equal", while in the real order – namely in the *way* of having the essence – are different (species towards genus) and diverse (individuals towards species)[304].

In thesis XXXVI, Fabro affirms that the reality of predicamental participation reveals the emergence of *esse* as the primary participated, thus constituting a foundation for all other formal perfections.

XXXVI. The reality of predicamental "participation", insofar as it verifies, in the logical-ontological order, the formal identity of participants in their respective participated – the genus by the species and the species by the individuals: thanks to the multiplicity-diversity of the participants – reveals the emergence of the first participated which is *esse*: every other commonness (both of specific perfections and individual characteristics) takes on meaning and foundation from *esse*. This means that the consideration of the *unifying* moment of the concept, as intelligible plexus of predication of the participants, is preceded by and is followed by the different reality-in-act and multiplicity of the participants. It is true that such diversity and multiplicity, in the universalizing ontological reflection, is involved in and unified in a common plexus of participants (identical in formal content), yet such unifying reflection in the plexuses of genera and species is possible starting from multiplicity-

[302] C. FABRO, *IST*, 165-166.

[303] In his article, Méndez mentions that Fabro agreed with him that "*ma anche*" should be added to the thesis. See J. MÉNDEZ, "Las tesis de C. Fabro", 186, n. 6.

[304] C. FABRO, *IST*, 166.

> diversity, and at the same time, finds fulfillment in the reference to the primary founding plexus of "*ens*" (*id quod participat esse*)[305].

This initial revelation of the emergence-priority of *esse* by means of predicamental participation is clarified in the thesis that follows: participation demands a real composition at every level of *ens* (operational level; essential-formal level; ontological level). The participant as a subject is in potency with regard to the participated as act, which, in turn, is limited by the potency. The action or operation (*agere* or *operari*) of a finite *ens* follows upon its *esse*:

> XXXVII. One can say then that the predicamental participation of the species in the genus and of the individuals in the species is "in ascension" toward the *transcendental* participation of beings (be these material or spiritual) in *esse*, in the act of being as the absolutely first founding act […]. For this reason, *ens in quantum ens* – or rather, the plexus of *id quod habet esse* – constitutes the object of radical reflection. The participation in every level of being requires the real composition of the *participant* (as subject-potency) and of *participated* (act limited by potency): matter limits the form in bodies; accidents, although operative and perfective, are limited by the form both in bodies and in spirits. Finite *ens* is *operans* by participation and not by essence, i.e., it passes from potency to act in action since it is composed of essence and act of being, or rather, since it is in act by participation in *esse*[306].

Fabro then deals with transcendental participation, first in connection with the transcendental plexus of essence and *esse* (XXXVIII) and then dynamically in terms of transcendental causality (XXXIX).

> XXXVIII. As the first notional plexus is that of *ens* which founds and sustains the meaning of every concept and meaning that follows, so also the first real transcendental plexus of essence and *esse* (*actus essendi*) founds and sustains reality both of the pure perfections and of the other acts in being and in action. Consequently, the finite spirits (including man) are *entia per participationem*, and therefore are also known by participation: "*Ens* means that which finitely participates in *esse*, and it is this which is proportioned to our intellect, whose object is some "that which is," as it is said in Book 3 of *On the Soul*. Hence our intellect can grasp only that which has a quiddity participating in *esse*" (*In Librum De Causis*, lect. 6). We are intelligent by participation also in a subjective sense, insofar as our intellect is a participation of the divine light:

[305] C. FABRO, *IST*, 173-174.
[306] C. FABRO, *IST*, 174.

"man's natural light, which is what makes him intellectual, is from God" (*Compendium theologiae*, I, ch. 129)[307].

XXXIX. Thus, *ens* is the semantic-term of the real κατ'ἐξοκήν insofar as it includes both essence (*id quod*) and indicates *esse* as first, emergent act which confers reality, both to the essence when it is placed in act and to the various operations and activities when they pass into act. The *first placing in act* of *ens*, then, is the passage of *ens from nothing to being*: which is not properly a "passage", but the primary constitution of *ens* which emerges over nothing thanks to the participated act of *esse*: "*Ex hoc quod aliquid est ens per participationem, sequitur quod sit causatum ab alio*" (I, q. 44, a. 1 ad 1). From this we have the complete formula of creation as participation (passive in the creature and active in God): "It must be said that every *ens*, in whatever way it is, is from God. For whatever is found in anything by participation, must be caused in it by that to which it belongs essentially, as iron becomes ignited by fire. […] [But] God is the subsisting *esse* itself *per se*; […] [and] subsisting *esse* must be one. Therefore, all other things apart from God are not their own *esse*, but participate in *esse*. Therefore it must be that all things which are diversified by the diverse participation of being, […], are caused by one First Being, Who possesses being most perfectly" (I, q. 44, a. 1)[308].

4) Metaphysics of *esse*: Theses XL-XLV deal with what we can call the "metaphysics of *esse*". In these five theses, Fabro returns to themes present in the first theses, yet always with respect to *esse*. For example, earlier Fabro dealt with the transcendentals in relation to *ens*. Here, in thesis XL, he deals with the transcendentals in relation to *esse*:

XL. *Esse* is, *per se*, the act of *ens* that is (insofar as it is either *esse ipsum* and is God, or has the act of being and is an *ens* as all finite realities are). In the foundation of the actuality of *ens* it belongs to elevate oneself to *esse* as act in Aristotle's sense, for whom act is perfection that is *in se* and precedes potency (it recalls Parmenides' *on-einai* which is opposed to nothingness). Thus, *ens* is the primary semantic-term with respect to one, true, and good, insofar as *esse* is the primary originary act from which unity, truth, and goodness proceed. In fact, it is in virtue of *esse* that the component principles of the substance (matter and form, substance and accidents) pertain to each other in *unity*; consequently, *ens* maintains the "truth" of its nature insofar as it has *esse* (according to the level of being that belongs to it). Therefore, good and perfection as well emerge on the foundation of *ens-unum-verum*, and therefore is actuated by *esse*: "*Non est verum quod intelligere vel velle sit nobilius quam*

[307] C. FABRO, *IST*, 174-175.
[308] C. FABRO, *IST*, 175.

> *esse si secernantus ab esse: immo sic esse eo est eis nobilius*" (*De Veritate*, q. 22, a. 6)[309].

The absolute emergence of *esse* as act refers to God who is both Pure Act and *Esse subsistens*. Act and *esse* are seen to mutually clarify one another: *esse* is seen as primary perfection, while act is seen in its original purity as *esse*. The real emergence of *ens-esse* affirms that it is the *primum reale* and first intelligible. This is understood though a resolution to foundation:

> XLI. The elevation of act to *esse* as first act unchains the act from the conditioning of the potency, such that *esse* confers (or realizes) act in its purity or absolute emergence, and this *Esse separatum* is God. It is the Aristotelian concrete [notion] of "act" that promotes *esse* to first emergent metaphysical perfection; but at the same time, the real emergence of *ens-esse* that realizes the reality of act in its originary purity. Thus, the two instances of act and of *esse* are complementary according to a constitutive pertaining to each other [*appartenenza*], such that *ens-esse* is the *primum reale*, and for this reason is the first intelligible in the resolution of the foundation: "illud per quod aliquid cognoscitur per similitudinem lumen dici potest; probat autem Philosophus in IX *Metaph*. [1051 a 29] quod unumquodque cognoscitur per id quod est in actu; et ideo ipsa actualitas rei est lumen ipsius" (*In Librum De Causis*, prop. 6). Light, in the order or sphere of essence, is the form; in the sphere of actuality it is *esse* (*actus essendi*), where *ens* is the *primum cognitum* as the foundation of every difference and quality of *ens* and of every form and difference of knowledge[310].

In St. Thomas's metaphysics, the articulation of reality according to act is brought into harmony with and perfected by the articulation of reality according to the notion or dialectic of participation. Fabro announces this in thesis XLII and explains its consequences in thesis XLIII: 1) although form is an act in the essential order, it falls to potency with respect to *esse*; 2) *operari* does not fall into potency with respect to *esse*, but rather remains a "second" act:

> XLII. Thus a metaphysics of act and of potency – which in Aristotle is closed in the immanence of "Thought of thought" – passes to a dialectic of participation, which begins in the transcendence of *ens* over thought and in the absolute emergence of uncreated *Esse subsistens* over created, material or spiritual beings. Essentialism is that philosophy that speaks of multiple

[309] C. FABRO, *IST*, 175-176.
[310] C. FABRO, *IST*, 176.

"contents" referred to the diversity of forms (medieval) or of the multiplicity of modes, phenomena… referred to the unity of consciousness as unique substance, monad, transcendental *Ego*, absolute Spirit, genera (modern thought). In both directions of thought, even though they are formally opposed (since the first expresses the exaggerated realism of the direct correspondence between planes of thinking and degrees of the real, while modern immanence identifies being with consciousness, being and thought), the couplet of essence and existence, the *content* of *ens* and the *fact* of being is at work. And thus, as for the Anti-Thomistic Scholastics, *ens* demands the real identity of essence and existence (the real is the realized essence, i.e., it has passed from possibility to reality), for the moderns self-consciousness is the truth of consciousness (Hegel), "existence precedes essence" (Sartre), etc. In the first case, the essence is always given as a Whole which covers man, in the second case even the essence is always given as the phenomenon of the inexhaustible fact of the essence[311].

XLIII. Thomistic realism founds the principle of the unity of the form on the act of the *esse* of *ens*: if matter and form (for example, body and soul) are between themselves as potency and act, form and *esse*, although both are acts, are as potency and act between each other, as well, *esse* and operation are as act and act. Yet, because the orders in which they are found are diverse, the essence, with respect to *esse* falls to receptive potency of *actus essendi* which is participated in it. On the other hand, *esse* and *operari* are both maintained at the level of act and are related, that is they co-pertain to each other as first act and second act, as founding act and founded act: *operari sequitur esse*. So, according to the diversity of natures (material or spiritual), one verifies the diversity of operations: some are bound to the condition of matter, although in diverse forms or degrees (for example, in atoms and in molecules, and finally, in superior animals, up to the human body); others are independent of matter, or rather, emerge over the body, such as understanding and willing, which are properly spiritual acts[312].

St. Thomas has effectively integrated the Platonic and Aristotelian couplets in the ultimate determination of finite *ens*:

XLIV. The hierarchy of the real is articulated, then, within the dialectic of participation, according to the tension of participant as potency and participated as act. In St. Thomas, the two couplets – which in Plato and Aristotle were opposed and excluded each other – are brought back together and integrated with each other: "Everything participated is compared to the

[311] C. FABRO, *IST*, 176.
[312] C. FABRO, *IST*, 177

> participant as its act. But whatever created form be supposed to subsist *per se*, must have *esse* by participation; for 'even life', or anything of that sort, participates in *esse*', as Dionysius says (*De Divinis Nominibus*, Ch. 5). Now participated *esse* is limited by the capacity of the participant; so that God alone, Who is His own *esse*, is pure act and infinite. But in intellectual substances there is composition of actuality and potentiality, not, indeed, of matter and form, but of form and participated *esse*. Wherefore some say that they are composed of that 'whereby they are' and that 'which they are'; for *esse* itself is that by which a thing is" (I, q. 75, a. 5 ad 4)[313].

In conclusion, then, the movement proper to metaphysical thought is an ascension from act to act: from accidental acts to substantial ones, and from both of these to their foundation on *esse*. This continues to the *Esse per essentiam*: act, is seen as perfection; God, in his fullness, is Pure Act and therefore his own *esse*:

> XLV. Thus, thought does not close itself in a circle (or circular movement) in the tension of matter and form (Augustinianism), of particular and universal (Averroism), of consciousness and self-consciousness (immanentism), but always remains open in a movement that ascends helicoidally, from act to act: from the formal acts in the essence, first accidental and then substantial, to found themselves on *esse*, the participated transcendental in *ens* of every form and nature, up to the *Esse per essentiam*. It is always the dialectic concerning act as perfection: "For in a created spiritual substance there must be two [principles], one of which is related to the other as potency is to act. This is clear from the following. For it is obvious that the first *ens*, which is God, is infinite act, as having in itself the entire fullness of being (*plenitudinem essendi*), not contracted to any generic or specific nature. Hence its very *esse* must not be an *esse* that is, as it were, put into some nature which is not its own *esse*, because thus it would be limited to that nature. Hence we say that God is His own *esse*" (*De spiritualibus creaturis*, a. 1)[314].

* * *

In summary, Fabro's theses affirm six things concerning metaphysical reflection: 1) the progress of thought in metaphysics is seen as a movement from accidental acts to substantial acts to their foundation on participated *actus essendi* and God who is Pure Act; 2) metaphysics is not exclusively an articulation of the structure and foundation of the real in terms of act, but

[313] C. FABRO, *IST*, 177. I, q. 75, a. 5 ad 4.
[314] C. FABRO, *IST*, 178.

rather finds an ulterior and superior clarification and articulation in terms of participation; 3) in metaphysical reflection the dialectic of participation moves from predicamental to transcendental participations; 4) using both act and participation, metaphysical reflection is able to clarify the proper relation between form and *esse* and *operari* and *esse*; 5) metaphysical reflection sees *ens* as the foundation of the transcendentals in virtue of *esse*; and 6) metaphysical reflection ends in the affirmation of God as Pure Act and *Esse per essentiam* and the creature as *ens per participationem*.

3.3 Problematic of Scholastic Thomism (1983)

Fabro's 1983 article entitled, "Problematica del tomismo di scuola", was written on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Jacques Maritain's birth. After highlighting the major theses of Augustinianism and Latin Averroism, Fabro points to how St. Thomas overcame both through an original speculative synthesis of Aristotelianism and Neo-Platonism: "The proper core of his metaphysical reflection is found in the composition – even in spiritual substances (against the simplicity of the Averroists) – of essence and the act of being (*esse*) and the unity of substantial form (against the multiplicity of the Augustinianists)"[315]. In St. Thomas, there is a new concept of act that moves along the line begun by Aristotle of the absolute emergence of act over potency, yet surpasses Aristotle and goes beyond the actuality of the form. St. Thomas comes "to the notion of *esse-actus essendi* as first act, act of every act participated from the First Act or *Esse subsistens* which is the First Principle itself, God"[316].

Fabro argues that the most characteristic and incisive Thomistic thesis in metaphysics was that of the real composition of essence and *esse-actus essendi* as originary plexus of act and potency in creatures: this thesis stands in stark contrast to the proposed hylemorphic composition (form with spiritual matter) of intelligent substances. As Fabro has mentioned in other works, shortly after the death of St. Thomas, the speculative rigor of St. Thomas's thought was compromised through the introduction of several terminological (and notional) changes. Fabro points to the alteration of the couplet *essentia-esse* to that of *esse essentiae-esse existentiae*. Hence, by using *esse* as a common denominator for existence and essence, *esse* was turned into a generic and ambiguous *realitas* and no longer referred to an

[315] C. FABRO, "Problematica del tomismo di scuola", 189.
[316] C. FABRO, "Problematica del tomismo di scuola", 190.

actuating principle *par excellence*. Eventually the transcendental couplet was simplified into that of *essentia-existentia*.

With these premises, Fabro begins his presentation of some aspects of Maritain's metaphysical thought. Fabro first notes that Maritain seems to welcome the semantic uncertainty (or equivocation) of the French term "*être*" which can mean both "to be" (*esse*) and "being" (*ens*). A short series of texts from Maritain's writings leads Fabro to conclude that Maritain presents *ens in quantum ens* as an *abstractum* which is focused on and fossilized in *existence*. Knowledge of *ens qua ens* is likened to a simple apprehension in the form of an intuition *a se*. Maritain's terminology leaves no room for doubt: "*intuition supérieure*"; "visualitation eidétique trascendentale"; "une authentique intuition intellectuelle". Fabro notes that Maritain, in order to speak of this singular grasping of *ens*, turns to St. Thomas's commentary on Boethius' *De Trinitate*, q. 5, a. 3 and the theory of the three degrees of abstraction in the sense of *separatio*:

> For this so singular grasping of *ens*, Maritain – with a very debatable interpretation of the commentary of Boethius' *De Trinitate* (q. 5, a. 3) – turns to the theory of the third degree of abstraction in the sense of *separatio*. Such an interpretation is certainly *extra* (and *contra*…) *litteram*, since Aquinas, in the article quoted, does not speak properly of *ens*, i.e., of its special form of apprehension but of the apprehension of the essences in the various levels of intelligibility, the third of which is reserved to the *divina scientia*. The interpretation given by Maritain is doubly deformed: first of all, since it places the confused *notio* of *ens-esse* at the level of the most qualified knowledge like the spiritual world and then since it considers *ens* on the intelligible line of the most abstract essences in the manner of a super-intelligible knowledge of a quasi-mystical flavor[317].

In contrast to Maritain's proposal, Fabro notes that *ens* is the object of the absolutely first knowledge, i.e., "knowledge of the presence of the concrete in its primary, real evidence and also in its primordial confusion: above all, *ens* is anything present in sensible experience where the clearest aspect is precisely that of givenness and imposing itself as sensible presence of absolute affirmation, something that can be tree, house, sky to use Maritain's images"[318].

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[317] C. FABRO, "Problematica del tomismo di scuola", 192. Fabro's text has *De Hebdomadibus* instead of *De Trinitate*.

[318] C. FABRO, "Problematica del tomismo di scuola", 192.

According to Maritain's Aristotelian framework, just as *simplex apprehensio* grasps essence, so does "judgment" pronounce existence: a confirmation that Maritain, in accord with Scholasticism and followers of Suarez speaks of existence as fact even if he calls it "*acte d'exister*". "The confirmation of this is that he attributes to the strong term of *ens*, not the originary Thomistic meaning of *id quod 'habet' esse*, but that of *id quod habet vel 'potest' habere esse* where the difference from the Thomistic notion is abysmal as is that which separates the real from the possible"[319]. Fabro points out that it is the essence which can be possible or real, not *ens* which is semantically and really *id quod est, id quod habet esse, id quod non potest simul esse et non esse*. *Ens in quantum ens* should not be placed in a state of possibility. As a participle, *ens* means act in a twofold manner: first as the being-in-act of *esse*; then, and consequently, as the act which is implicit in every other act. This determination, Fabro holds, is missing in Maritain's formulation. The root of such a formulation can be found in the over-emphasis on extrinsic causality characteristic of Scholasticism and the forgetting of the intrinsic nature of *esse* in its real composition with essence.

Fabro returns to the point about *simplex apprehensio* and judgment: In Maritain, judgment precedes the elaboration of the concept of "existence" and the "intuition of being". For Maritain – as for Neo-scholasticism and for neo-Thomism in general – the judgment is the "seat" of the act of being and is cognitive activity of the affirmation of the act of being ("existence" and "*acte d'être*" for Maritain are synonyms)[320]. For Aristotle and St. Thomas, judgment embraces the entire gamma of affirmations and negations. It is not confined to positive realities, but can refer also to privations and negations. In light of this, two difficulties arise for Maritain's theory: explaining the grasping of *esse* in judgments which deal with such privations and negations of being and explaining this with regard to affirmations about *substantia secunda* (*genus, species*…) which have *esse in mente*.

> The created, first act is not the form, but the participated act of *esse*. And since things are known *in quantum sunt in actu*, the first object of knowing is not the *simplex apprehensio* according to the essence, but the synthetic *apprehensio* or συμπλοκή according to the act of *esse* which is precisely the reality of absolute act in its emergent purity and perfection. It is to this, i.e., to the concrete which is *ens*, that it thus belongs to be *primum cognitum* which is not, then, the *simplex apprehensio* of the confused essence to which the affirmation of *esse*

[319] C. FABRO, "Problematica del tomismo di scuola", 192.
[320] C. FABRO, "Problematica del tomismo di scuola", 194.

in judgment responds, which in such a case would be a formal judgment of the content of essence and not of presence of reality[321].

Fabro quotes fifteen texts of St. Thomas on *ens* as *primum cognitum* in succession; these are followed by ten brief theses which summarize the preceding:

I – *Ens* constitutes the absolutely first object of our knowing: St. Thomas does not speak of *intuitio* and much less of *abstractio*, but simply of *apprehensio* which is the most obvious and immediate operation and, thus, the most important.

II – *Ens* expresses the primary and total concreteness since it embraces both act (*esse*) and content (*essentia*) in a more or less vague way or precisely according to the psychic development of the subject.

III – Thus, *ens* is the founding plexus of all ulterior knowing, presupposed in all *real* knowledge: as the comprehensive plexus of the real as such, always presupposed and thus, it is a noema or a *intentio stans*: what one could call the bearing plexus and axis of knowing.

IV – As such, *ens* is at the foundation of the genesis of the first principle which is that of contradiction, namely, the formula of the prioritary and absolute character of being over non-being, of affirmation over negation and in general of the positive over the negative.

V – Thus, far from founding itself on judgment, the *apprehensio entis* is not only the foundation but is the only one that can give meaning to the first judgment or principle and with it to all the other concepts and judgments.

VI – *Ens* is also the originary intensive plexus which is comprehensive of the other transcendentals, namely *unum*, *aliquid, verum, bonum*…which dilate *in se* in its real structure (*unum*, *aliquid*) and with respect to the proper activity of the spirit (*verum* for the intellect, *bonum* for the will).

VII – Therefore, if the *aprehensio entis* as *id quod habet esse* is primordial and foundational, with the principle of contradiction, of all the other concepts and judgments, it cannot, therefore, be attributed properly to the judgment which supposes it, as we have seen.

VIII – Further, in this perspective, St. Thomas, clearly distinguishes *ens* which is *in rerum natura* from *verum* which is proper of the reflection of the mind: "*Non ens dicitur simpliciter (…). Uno modo dicitur ens et non ens secundum compositionem et divisionem propositionis, prout sunt idem cum vero et falso: et sic ens et non ens sunt in mente tantum, ut dicitur in VI Metaphys*." (*In V Physic*., lect. 2, n. 656).

IX – The grasping of *ens-esse* on behalf of the human mind is in the primary and constitutive convergence with the sensitive sphere that operates and

[321] C. FABRO, "Problematica del tomismo di scuola", 195.

> maintains contact with sensible reality which is the sphere proper to knowing of human nature formed of body and spirit. One can assert that we are dealing with a knowledge that is completely special and indispensable at the same time: confused at the beginning as immediate apprehension of *id quod est*, of the primary immediate reflection which is explicated together with the knowledge of experience and with the compared reflection of the various sciences.
>
> X – For St. Thomas, who takes up again still in his way an original theory of Aristotle, this first knowledge of both *ens* and the first concepts, and the principle of contradiction and of the other first principles is prepared in the sphere of the senses (both external and internal) by *experimentum*, which is the operation of lived experience by means of which the intellect (and with it the will) always remains in direct contact with reality[322].

For St. Thomas, then, *ens* is not an *a priori* of apperception to be overcome by means of a dialectic, nor a *posterius* to the activity of judgment. *Ens* presents itself to the mind as *id quod habet esse*, without intermediary functions. *Esse* as *actus essendi* is worked out in connection to the Thomistic notion of participation and is the first, constitutive act of *ens*. "For Plato, act is εἶδος-idea, for Aristotle it is εἶδος-μορφή and its proto-type is the ψυχή as ἐντελέχεια πρώτη: εἶναι is first the reality of the form (essence) and then the function of the mind operating the conjunction (is) or separation (is not) in the semantics of judgment: this *per se*… does not mean anything"[323]. Likewise, Fabro concludes that Maritain's *être*: "is no longer the plexus of essence and *esse*, as of potency and act in the sense of participant and participated, but as the *non-nihil*"[324].

* * *

Fabro's main critique of Maritain's metaphysical proposal concerns the deficiencies inherent in sustaining that our initial grasping of *ens* is found in a third moment, consequent upon the simple apprehension of essence and a judgment of existence. As A. Contat points out, Maritain's proposal is heavily dependent on Scholasticism (John of St. Thomas)[325]: three degrees of abstraction, confusion of *esse* with *existentia*, etc… Fabro's

[322] C. FABRO, "Problematica del tomismo di scuola", 198-199.
[323] C. FABRO, "Problematica del tomismo di scuola", 199.
[324] C. FABRO, "Problematica del tomismo di scuola", 199.
[325] See A. CONTAT, "Le figure della differenza ontologica …", 98-115.

proposal of an initial apprehension of *ens* is in line with what he has developed in other works.

3.4 The foundation of metaphysics (1986)

Fabro's 1986 article, "Alla ricerca della fondazione della metafisica"[326], dedicates several pages to the "heights of Thomistic speculation". In them, Fabro contrasts the analytical method employed by the "School" that arises around "essential thinkers" and the synthetic method followed by the "essential thinker" which "centers on the originary intuition of the dominant principle"[327]. The analytical method codifies and develops the implications and consequences of the essential thinker's position. Such happened with the "Thomistic School".

"Essential thinkers" maintain the demand of the "fundament" and are an indispensable point of reference. St. Thomas can guide us in the search for and recovery of the truth of the fundament. In light of this, Fabro proposes to expound his work on St. Thomas, to which he has dedicated a great part of his life[328]. First of all there is the *historical-critical aspect* (moment). This – Fabro notes – should constitute the indispensable "entrance" to the speculative moment, in which we find an "emergent synthesis" of Platonic Idea and Aristotelian Act from which the Christian tradition[329]. Secondly – and consequently – there is the *critical-speculative aspect* (*moment*). For St. Thomas, this is seen able all in the interchangeable

[326] C. FABRO, "Alla ricerca della fondazione della metafisica", *Choros* I, 1, 1986, 7-18.

[327] See C. FABRO, "Alla ricerca della fondazione della metafisica", 14.

[328] See C. FABRO, "Alla ricerca della fondazione della metafisica", 15.

[329] See C. FABRO, "Alla ricerca della fondazione della metafisica", 15-16: "The renewed historiography of Scholasticism: Denifle, Ehrle, Mandonnet, Pelster, Pelzr, Kock, Grabmann… and disciples (Théry, Simonin Meersseman) have polarized the doctrinal climate of the 13th century, in which St. Thomas worked, into three large schools: Augustinianism followed in the theological field by the conservatives present especially in the Franciscan school with Alexander of Hales and Bonaventure as their heads; Averroism dominant in the Faculty of Arts in which Siger of Brabante emerges; and, last, but for us first, the thought of St. Thomas which undertook a "new way" which stupefied the University of Paris as William of Tocco reminds us in his life of the Saint. The newness of his orientation was the emergent synthesis of the transcendence of the Idea – Platonic form – and of act – Aristotelian form –, both, however, considered from within Christian creation".

belonging of the Aristotelian couplet of act and potency and Platonic couplet of participated and participant: "it is the moment which has remained more in the shadows in the tradition of the Thomistic school, in which the Aristotelian couplet always taken more foothold, and ended by dominating"[330]. Fabro then outlines the three, latter stages of metaphysical reflection: creation, the ultimate understanding of the real distinction, the analogy and predication of being:

> St. Thomas, with the *Diremption* of *ens* into essence and *esse*, as *actus essendi*, moves on to found the three moments of analysis, namely, a) the metaphysical interpretation of creation as primary origin of the cosmos, b) the real distinction of essence and *esse-actus essendi* and c) the articulation of analogy as predication of *plurium ad unum* of intrinsic attribution. Primordial origin, primordial composition, primordial predication according to an interchangeable belonging in *entia per participationem*, both material and spiritual[331].

Thirdly – and lastly – there is the *speculative-conclusive aspect*. This concerns the doctrine of *esse* as *actus essendi*. Fabro argues that "this notion of *esse* as transcendental emergent act is present in Aquinas from the beginning in the *Commentary* on the *Sentences* and in the *De ente* and is intensified from work to work up to the end, namely, in the commentary on the *Liber De causis* and in the unfinished *De substantiis separatis*"[332]. Fabro then outlines the principal stages of this itinerary of metaphysical reflection (*in via iudicii*):

> [1] *Ens* is the first intelligible object and at the same time, the primary foundation of intelligibility: "*Id quod primo cadit in intellectu est ens. Unde unicuique apprehenso a nobis, attribuimus quod sit ens et per consequens quod sit unum et bonum quae convertuntur cum ente*" (I-II, q. 55, a. 4 ad 1). And in a preceding text with a hint at the self-consciousness for the foundation of the derivation of the transcendentals: "*Intellectus per prius apprehendit ipsum ens, et secundatio apprehendit se intelligere ens et tertio apprehendit se appetere ens. Unde primario est ratio entis, secundo est ratio veri, tertio ratio boni, licet bonum sit in rebus*" (I, q. 16, a. 4 ad 2). […].
> [2] The apprehension of *ens* is the foundation of the evidence of the first principles and, first of all, that of contradiction: "… *in qua cognitione*

[330] See C. FABRO, "Alla ricerca della fondazione della metafisica", 16.
[331] C. FABRO, "Alla ricerca della fondazione della metafisica", 16.
[332] C. FABRO, "Alla ricerca della fondazione della metafisica", 16.

(entis) fundatur primorum principiorum notitia ut non esse simul affirmare et negare et alia huiusmodi (*Summa contra Gentiles*, II, ch. 83, adhuc)… *quod fundatur super rationem entis et non entis: et super hoc principio omnia alia fundantur*" (I-II, q. 94, a. 2). […].

[3] *Esse* as *actus entis* can be said of essence-form and *actus essendi*. *Actus essendi* is the first perfection as intensive act of all perfections: "*Primum in omnibus effectibus est esse: nam omnia alia sunt quaedam determinationes ipsius*" (*Summa contra Gentiles*, III, 66 Item); "… *est maxime formale omnium*" (I, q. 7, a. 1); "… *esse est id quod est magis intimum cuilibet rei et quod profundius omnibus inest cum sit formale respectu omnium quae in re sunt*" (I, q. 8, a. 1); "*inter omnia esse est illud quod immediatius et simplicius omnibus inest*" (*De anima*, a. 9); "…*est complementum omnium*" and, thus is the "*proprius effectus Dei* (*Quodlibet.*, XII, a. 5).

[4] Thus, God, the first principle and fullness of every perfection, is called *Esse per essentiam* or *Esse per se subsistens* in absolute simplicity, while for Aristotle he remains *in se* separate as "thought of thought" (*Metaph*. XII, 7),which is together *in se* absolute transcendence and, with respect to the world, immanence or permanence in it according to the triple intensity of *per essentiam*, *per potentiam* and *per praesentiam* (I, q. 8, aa. 1-4).

[5] Creatures, on the other hand, as *entia per participationem*, are above all, composed of essence as potency and of *esse* as *actus essendi*, which is both the foundation, both of the first cognitive plexus, which is the very semantic-term of *ens*, or of the first nexus, which is the creatural composition of *essentia* and *esse*: it is here that the derivation-obliteration of *esse ut actus* in *existential ut factum* is consummated in Scholasticism, and, consequently, the promotion of extrinsic efficient causality to *primum metaphysicum*, sliding consequently into essentialism or in the extrinsic duality of possible essence and realized essence.

[6] The dialectic of participation, both predicamental of species with respect to individuals and of species with respect to genera, and transcendental (of *entia* in *esse*) is repeated by ascending degrees according to the order and emergence of perfections[333].

These six stages are able to be distinguished in works we have been analyzing: 1) *ens* as *primum cognitum* and foundation of the transcendentals and 2) first principles; 3) the emergence of *esse* as perfection of all perfections (formal resolution) and act of all acts (real resolution); 4) the metaphysical determination of God as *Ipsum Esse Subsistens* (Fourth Way – principle of separated perfection) and yet present to all things (principle of participation); 5) doctrine of creation and participative structure of all

[333] C. FABRO, "Alla ricerca della fondazione della metafisica", 16-17.

creatures (novelty of St. Thomas's doctrine with respect to Scholastic *existentia* and extrinsic causality); 6) dialectic of participation (predicamental and transcendental) as the means by which this metaphysical reflection is carried out in its principal stages.

3.5 The emergence of Thomistic *esse* over Aristotelian act (1989-1990)

Fabro's last article on metaphysics, "L'emergenza dello *esse* tomistico sull'atto aristotelico: breve prologo", deals with the emergence of *esse* in light of *ens* as the *primum cognitum* of the intellect. Part one of the article reflects on the emergence – understood as logical and ontological priority – of Aristotelian act and concludes with Aristotle's definition of metaphysics as a science that considers *ens qua ens* and its properties. As first philosophy, metaphysics is the science that deals with principles and causes. Aristotle lists four causes: 1) substance and essence; 2) matter and substrate, 3) the principle of movement; 4) the end and the good[334]. Here, Fabro poses a question: "Today, this framework leaves us a little perplexed, because if the object of this radical reflection is *ens qua ens* then one should show or, in some way, explain *how* and *when*, *when* and *how* we apprehend this exceptional noetic plexus with which knowledge itself begins, is accompanied at every stage and brought to fulfillment"[335]. Aristotle, Fabro notes, does not provide an answer. How then can this real or apparent *impasse* be overcome?

Fabro considers the unsatisfactory responses offered by Scholasticism and Heidegger in part two of the article, and begins part three – on the metaphysical emergence of Thomistic act – by affirming that St. Thomas, while accepting the Aristotelian prospective on abstraction of the universal from singulars, sees that the solution to the problem of *primum cognitum* lies in *ens* itself. Fabro focuses on the meaning of *ens* and notes that St. Thomas's youthful texts oscillate between a twofold and threefold meaning[336]. St. Thomas's second phase of thought deepens in the

[334] See ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, A, 3, 983a 24.

[335] C. FABRO, "L'emergenza dello *esse* tomistico…", 159.

[336] Regarding the *dupliciter* meaning of *ens*, Fabro references: 1) *De ente et essentia*, ch. 1 where St. Thomas refers to *ens* as divided by ten categories and as the truth of a proposition; 2) *In I* Sent., d. 29, q. 5, a. 1 ad 1. For *tripliciter* meaning of *esse*, Fabro references: 1) *In I Sent.*, d. 33, q. 1, a. 1 ad 4: *esse* as *quidditas vel natura, ipse actus essentiae, and veritas propositionis*; and 2) *In III Sent*., d. 6, q. 2, a. 2.

Aristotelian doctrine of *act* by means of an advance toward the notion of participation (cf. Boethius, *De Causis*, Pseudo-Dionysius). As a result, "the Thomistic conception of act in the last phase moves closer to the Platonic principle of *perfectio separata*, thus *surpassing* both Plato and Aristotle at the same time, in an original conception, that maintains both speculative moments: perfection and act"[337]. Neo-Platonic sources are also involved in this speculative elevation of Aristotelian act which results in a new conception of act results and brings about the final emergence of *esse* as absolute act.

St. Thomas's youthful texts in his *Commentary on the Sentences* (*In I Sent*., d. 8, q. 1, a. 1) and from *De Veritate* (q. 1, a. 1) affirm that *ens* is the *primum cognitum*, that it is evident *per se* and that the first principle of the intellect is founded on *ens*. Yet, the question remains: "How and when, when and how do we apprehend *ens*? How does the plexus *ens* make its way into our consciousness and put it in movement?"[338]. To respond to these questions, Fabro looks at the meaning that we give to the term "*ens*". Grammatically, "*ens*" is taken as the active participle which "indicates the exercise of an act: *ens* is that which is in the act of being, that which is or exercises the act of being. *Res* comes afterward since it is that which has the act of being. Therefore, it presupposes *ens* as the ontological foundation which founds it" [339]. The metaphysical and theoretical primacy of *ens* is affirmed by St. Thomas in the following text:

> Forasmuch as nature is ever directed to one thing, it follows that of one power there is naturally one object, for instance color is the object of sight, sound of hearing. Wherefore the intellect, since it is one power, has one natural object, of which it has knowledge *per se* and naturally. And this object must be that under which are comprised all things known by the intellect: just as under color are comprised all colors, which are visible *per se*. Now this is nothing other than *ens*. Therefore our intellect knows *ens* naturally, and whatever is comprised *per se* under *ens* as such; and on this knowledge is based the

[337] C. FABRO, "L'emergenza dello *esse* tomistico…", 165.

[338] C. FABRO, "L'emergenza dello *esse* tomistico…", 167.

[339] C. FABRO, "L'emergenza dello *esse* tomistico…", 167: "Penso si debba rispondere con la grammatica elementare che intende il participio nella sua forma attiva come indicante l'esercizio di un atto: ente è ciò che è in atto di essere, che è od esercita l'atto di essere. La *res* viene dopo poiché è ciò che ha l'atto di essere, quindi presuppone come fondamento ontologico l'*ens* che la fondi.

knowledge of first principles, such as it is not the same thing to affirm and negate, and the like[340].

Ens, insofar as it is the first *knowable*, is also the first *predicable* and thus accompanies and sustains all the predicates that can be "mediated" in the discourse of the verb "*est*". This predication is valid both for the categories (specific forms) and the transcendentals (general forms) as an important text of *De Veritate* (q. 21, a. 4 ad 4) makes clear. Having established the ontological and theoretical priority of *ens*, Fabro concludes part three of the article by affirming that just as every verb (to speak, to write…) express an action insofar as it includes the act of being in that action, so also every concept is meaningful insofar as it includes the concept of *ens*. Yet this leaves open two questions, "What concept is *ens*? What does it contain?".

To answer these questions, part four of the article deals with the twofold emergence of Thomistic *ens-esse* and begins by clarifying the twofold emergence (priority or primacy) of *ens* as the participle of *esse*: "As a participle form *ens* means being in act, and as the participle of the verb *esse*, *ens* means the being in act of the verb *esse*. Thus – and this is the first important conclusion – *ens* as participle of *esse* has a *double* emergence, that common to all participles which express being in act and that which is special to it, being the participle of *esse* which is the verb included in every verb"[341]. Fabro notes that in Aristotle's thought being (*essere*) is placed in the figures (*schemata*) of the predicaments – in the functional plexus of act and potency and in the dynamism of the four causes of becoming. In St. Thomas's texts, on the other hand, *ens* is based on *esse* and emerges over *essentia*[342]. These and other texts evidence the absolute primacy of *ens* in

[340] *Summa Contra Gentiles*, II, 83: "Cum natura semper ordinetur ad unum, unius virtutis oportet esse naturaliter unum obiectum: sicut visus colorem, et auditus sonum. Intellectus igitur cum sit una vis, est eius unum naturale obiectum, cuius per se et naturaliter cognitionem habet. Hoc autem oportet esse id sub quo comprehenduntur omnia ab intellectu cognita: sicut sub colore comprehenduntur omnes colores, qui sunt per se visibiles. Quod non est aliud quam ens. Naturaliter igitur intellectus noster cognoscit ens, et ea quae sunt per se entis inquantum huiusmodi; in qua cognitione fundatur primorum principiorum notitia, ut non esse simul affirmare et negare, et alia huiusmodi. Haec igitur sola principia intellectus noster naturaliter cognoscit, conclusiones autem per ipsa".

[341] C. FABRO, "L'emergenza dello *esse* tomistico…", 170.

[342] See *In I Sent*., d. 19, q. 5, a. 1; *In I Sent*. d. 25, q. 1, a. 4; *De Veritate* q. 1, a. 1.

knowledge due to the primacy that *esse* as act has in reality. In fact, what is prior in *rationem* "first falls into the conception of the intellect. Now the first thing which falls into the conception of the intellect is *ens*; because everything is knowable only inasmuch as it is in act […]. Hence, *ens* is the proper object of the intellect, and is the primary intelligible; as sound is the primary audible"[343]. Fabro concludes that just as all verbs refer to *esse* and all participles refer to *ens*, so also all formalities and perfections refer to *esse*. This formal resolution to *esse* as "plexus" of all perfections is continued in a reflection on *esse* as act of all acts[344].

After affirming this twofold emergence of intensive *esse* as perfection of all perfections and act of all acts, Fabro re-affirms St. Thomas's speculative synthesis with regard to Platonic and Aristotelian thought. This is done by means of the dialectic of participation and integration of participation with act:

> And thus the act of all acts and perfection of all perfections is the "qualitative jump" past Aristotle, yet… with Aristotle. In other words, we bring the demand of the perfection of Aristotle's act to its ultimate explicitation. This, however, is done by means of a new step. In fact, the ultimate theoretical foundation of the absolute emergence of Thomistic *esse* is deepened in and reposes in the dialectic of participation by means of the correspondence of potency and act with participant and participated. Potency and act support the speculation of

[343] I, q. 5, a. 2: "Illud ergo est prius secundum rationem, quod prius cadit in conceptione intellectus. Primo autem in conceptione intellectus cadit ens, quia secundum hoc unumquodque cognoscibile est, inquantum est actu, […]. Unde ens est proprium obiectum intellectus, et sic est primum intelligibile, sicut sonus est primum audibile". See also I, q. 5, a. 2 ad 4: "Vita et scientia, et alia huiusmodi, sic appetuntur ut sunt in actu, unde in omnibus appetitur quoddam esse. Et sic nihil est appetibile nisi ens, et per consequens nihil est bonum nisi ens" and I, q. 5, a. 3: "Omne enim ens, inquantum est ens, est in actu, et quodammodo perfectum, quia omnis actus perfectio quaedam est. Perfectum vero habet rationem appetibilis et boni, ut ex dictis patet. Unde sequitur omne ens, inquantum huiusmodi, bonum esse".

[344] C. FABRO, "L'emergenza dello *esse* tomistico…", 171: "The semantic dominion of *ens* is thus uncontested and this is because *esse* as act is absolutely emergent, it is the act of all acts and the perfection of all perfections, thus it is the light and source of all evidence. Here the intensity of Thomistic reflection is at its extreme, and has never been achieved either before or after in the history of thought: the apogee of intensive *esse* as act". Here, Fabro quotes texts from St. Thomas which are similar to ones we have already seen (*Summa Contra Gentiles*, I, 28; I, q. 4, a. 1 ad 3; *Q. De anima*, a. 9; I, q. 8, a. 1).

> the Aristotelian schools, participant and participated that of the Neo-Platonic schools with mutual mixes, outside of and within Christianity: only the notion of Thomistic *ens-esse* has achieved the speculative synthesis that up to now has remained unsurpassed. […] *Esse* is the primary act that is participated and thus the act of every act[345].

Here Fabro quotes St. Thomas's commentary on Pseudo-Dionysius – texts we have already seen in the article "La problematica dello *esse tomistico*" (1959) in the context of metaphysical emergence[346]. Fabro concludes the article by relating the absolute emergence of *esse* (double emergence of act over potency and act over act) to the two participations: predicamental (in the sense of the concrete participant participating in the formal participated) and transcendental (in the sense of these formal participations participating in *esse*). Fabro first recalls the participation of the perfections of life and wisdom in *esse* (previously called the formal resolution of the essence)[347]. Then, Fabro speaks about the real resolution of *actus essendi*, along the line of act. This resolution ends in God as cause of all being:

> And now the conclusion of this double participation and thus double emergence, not only of the act over the potency according to the classical Aristotelian scheme, but of act over act which is the theoretical conquest of Aquinas: 'Therefore these (life *per se*, wisdom *per se*…) which are the principles of the others, are not except by participation in being, further, those things which participate in these are not except by participation in *esse*. And it is clear [this is the final step] that God causes all by his very *esse*'[348]. Here, the

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[345] C. FABRO, "L'emergenza dello *esse* tomistico…", 172-173.

[346] *In V De Divinis nominibus*, lect. 1.

[347] C. FABRO, "L'emergenza dello *esse* tomistico…", 173-174.: "Therefore, a real double participation, above all that of the (concrete) participants to the respective form or participated participation (the formal act: living beings in life…): it is the predicamental participation that opens up to the transcendental one; then that of the various participations (life *per se*, wisdom *per se*…) to *esse*: 'Et similiter de omnibus aliis participantibus, quaecumque participant hoc vel illo vel ambobus vel multis, semper invenies quod huiusmodi, licet participentur ab aliis, tamen ipsa etiam participant ipso esse, et primo intelliguntur ut participantes esse, quam quod sint principia aliorum, per hoc quod ab aliis participantur' [*In V De Divinis nominibus*, lect. 1, 639]".

[348] *In V De Divinis nominibus*, lect. 1, n. 639: " Ergo si ista quae sunt principia aliorum, non sunt nisi per participationem essendi, multo magis ea quae participant ipsis, non sunt nisi per participationem ipsius esse. Et sic patet quod Deus per ipsum esse omnia causat".

dialectical resolution comes to its end, deepening itself in the principle, *esse*, which is the principle of all principles and the act of all acts. It is true that such as *esse* is foreign to both Plato and Aristotle, but is theorized on a double slope of Plato and Aristotle which in the Thomistic interpretation converges in the discovery of a *duplex actus* (*essentia-forma* and *esse-actus essendi*) and of a *duplex potentia* (matter toward form and then form toward *esse*). It is the formula of the Angelic Doctor's mature speculation: "Hence in composite things there is a *two-fold act* and a *two-fold potency* to consider. For first of all, matter is as potency with respect to form, and the form is its act. And secondly, if the nature is constituted of matter and form, it is as potency with respect to *esse* itself, insofar as it is able to receive this"[349]. Act over act, emergence over emergence, transcendental participation (in function of *esse*) over predicamental participation and final affirmation of *esse* as first and ultimate act[350].

* * *

To conclude, the article clearly brings out the strong continuity with his first work on participation, *La nozione metafisica di participazione*, and the twofold resolution of *ens* by means of perfection and act. The outline is maintained: predicamental perfections and participations open up to transcendental ones. The resolution of perfection is complemented by the resolution of act: all perfections first participate in *esse* and are reduced to potency with respect to it as to their act. In this way, *esse* emerges as the perfection of all perfections and act of all acts.

3.6 The originality and emergence of *esse* (1991)

During a celebration of his eightieth birthday, Fabro made some remarks on the originality of Thomistic *esse*[351]. The spontaneous character of the discourse and answers to the questions that followed reveals the

[349] *Q. disp. De spiritualibus creaturis*, a. 1: "Unde in rebus compositis est considerare duplicem actum, et duplicem potentiam. Nam primo quidem materia est ut potentia respectu formae, et forma est actus eius; et iterum natura constituta ex materia et forma, est ut potentia respectu ipsius esse, in quantum est susceptiva eius".

[350] C. FABRO, "L'emergenza dello *esse* tomistico…", 174-175.

[351] Fabro's reflections (30 April 1991) were gathered and translated into Spanish by Elvio Fontana and published as "Nuestra patria de estudiosos es la Verdad", *Diálogo* 15 (1996), 7-23. I have translated the texts from the Spanish.

primacy that metaphysical reflection has in Fabro's thought. Among Fabro's affirmations we find that metaphysical analysis is *reductio* to foundation and the foundation is Act[352]; *ens* as the first notion of the intellect is special and "not structured in the mode of a concept"[353]; *esse* has a plurality of meanings, but *esse ut actus* – intensive *esse* – should not be confused with existence[354]; and *esse* properly emerges as *actus essendi*[355].

Regarding this last point, Fabro once again offered a clarification of the term "emergence". Referring to a conference by Fr. Thomas Tyn, Fabro said:

> Fr Tyn presented the Thomistic tradition of the last seven centuries. The same Thomistic tradition in which I also, as a small child, was educated – although afterwards I escaped. In the tradition of the Thomistic school we find a couplet: *esse essentiae – esse existentiae*. *Esse* was bifurcated into *esse essentiae* and *esse existentiae*. No! It is not possible and if you bifurcate *esse* into *esse essentiae* and *esse existentiae*, *esse* is converted into something common to essence and existence; it does not emerge. On the other hand, that what is constitutive in the thought of St. Thomas is the emergence of *esse* over *essentia*. To emerge means to rise above, to go higher; as well, to rise above means to dominate what is below[356].

Two other reflections interest us. The first is in response to a question which asks where philosophy begins. Fabro said that the beginning is in the grasping of the plexus *ens*: "We – one of the lacunae in my exposition – begins by grasping the plexus *ens*. The plexus *ens*! Formally: *id quod habet esse*. The plexus *ens*: we have been surrounded by it, wrapped up in it, caught by it, clutched by it, immersed in it – I think it is clear what I am trying to say. Namely, it is not that we enter and leave *ens*; rather, we are there"[357]. Secondly, Fabro was asked about man's experience of *esse*. Without responding directly, Fabro stressed that we should not confuse *ens* with *esse* and that "we have an experience of *ens*, but not like any other experience, but rather as the constitutive experience of all experiences. I can grasp a rose, I can grasp, perceive, intuit, enjoy the presence of the scent of a rose, only insofar as I move in the interior of *ens*. The rose has a scent, has

[352] See C. FABRO, "Nuestra patria de estudiosos es la Verdad", 9.
[353] C. FABRO, "Nuestra patria de estudiosos es la Verdad", 10-11.
[354] See C. FABRO, "Nuestra patria de estudiosos es la Verdad", 8 and 11.
[355] C. FABRO, "Nuestra patria de estudiosos es la Verdad", 11.
[356] C. FABRO, "Nuestra patria de estudiosos es la Verdad", 11.
[357] C. FABRO, "Nuestra patria de estudiosos es la Verdad", 18-19.

colors; *ens* is not scented nor colored; it has all scents and colors, since any scent or color is real scent or color insofar as it is *ens*. Are we in agreement?"[358].

The emergence of *esse* as *actus essendi*, metaphysics as *reductio* to foundation, foundation as Act, *ens* as first notion: these are some of the cardinal points of Fabro's metaphysical reflection. His conference is a fitting final text in our historical overview.

4. Conclusion

These six works from the 1980s confirm the major theses of Fabro's work on the method of metaphysical reflection: 1) our initial grasping of *ens* is not an abstraction or consequent upon judgment, but is rather, a synthetic apprehension of *ens* as the originary plexus of act and content; 2) the proper method of metaphysics is a resolution of perfection and act and reduction to fundament; 3) the goal of metaphysics is the conclusive determination of *esse* as *Ipsum esse subsistens* (God) and *esse participatum* (the creature's act of being); 4) This goal is obtained by a progressive metaphysical reflection on the structure, causality and predication of being.

A general conclusion from our overview in previous chapters is that some elements in Fabro's early works (especially in *NMP*) should be interpreted in the light of the changes or corrections made in his more mature works. In particular, when quoting *NMP*, scholars should be attentive to the nuances and differences between Fabro's thought on how we come to know the "*ratio essendi*" (*ragione di essere*) and how we come to know *actus essendi*. One should be cautious when quoting or drawing conclusions from texts which use the distinction between *esse essentiae* and *esse existentiae*. Certain intuitions found in *NMP* are clarified in later works and articles. For example, Fabro's early portrayal of the general progress of our understanding of *ens-esse* (initial notion, proportional notion, intensive notion) is modified somewhat to refer, in particular, to our metaphysical notion of *esse* (*esse commune*, *esse* as act of *ens*, *esse* in relation to essence; intensive *esse*). As well, Fabro's distinction in *NMP* between the reflection on *esse* as essence and the reflection on *esse* as *actus essendi*[359] is developed in later works as a distinction between a "formal reduction-resolution-emergence" of participated perfection and a "real reduction-resolution-

[358] C. FABRO, "Nuestra patria de estudiosos es la Verdad", 19-20.
[359] See C. FABRO, *NMP*, 194-201.

emergence" according to the notions of act and potency[360]. As we have seen, Fabro's methodological terminology is very flexible and fluid. He uses terms like dialectical ascension, intensive abstraction, metaphysical reflection, formal resolution, reduction to fundament, dialectical resolution, real emergence, dialectic of participation, etc… At times these terms overlap, and at other times they specify different moments within metaphysical reflection.

[360] See C. FABRO, "La problematica dello *esse* tomistico", *TPM*, 106-109.

Chapter Six

THE METHOD OF METAPHYSICAL REFLECTION

Our task here is to recapitulate and establish the content, contributions and limits of Fabro's thought on resolution-reduction as the proper method of metaphysical reflection. The chronological overview of his texts during the preceding chapters revealed that in his early works Fabro equates the method of "intensive metaphysical abstraction" with a twofold resolution of formal perfection and participated act, stating that both resolutions end in the "notion of intensive *esse*". In 1963, the term "abstraction" was eventually replaced with "reflection", while the term "*resolutio*" was maintained and frequently used in other works.

In 1948, Fabro mentions both *resolutio* and *separatio* when speaking about the method of Thomistic metaphysics: *resolutio* is understood as a dialectical-reductive method; *separatio* refers to the distinction-separation proper to metaphysical reflection (for example, distinguishing *esse* from essence in creatures or God from creatures). The influence of Geiger's work on the distinction between abstraction and *separatio* is seen in the second edition of *NMP* (1950), where Fabro inserts several paragraphs in the section on "intensive metaphysical abstraction" to counterbalance the remote influence of Cajetan's three degrees of abstraction found in the 1939 edition. In *PC*, Fabro argues that *resolutio* is not an intuition or an abstraction and that *esse* as *actus essendi* is not properly grasped in a judgment or *separatio*.

From the 1960s onward, *resolutio* is specified as the metaphysical path of reason from *ens* to *esse*. Proper to this *resolutio* is a "*resolutio* of perfection" (a formal-dialectical consideration of specific, generic and pure perfections that leads to *esse* as perfection of all perfections), a "*resolutio* of act" (from accidental acts to *actus essendi*) and a "*reductio* to fundament" (from participated *actus essendi* to *Ipsum Esse Subsistens*).

This, in synthesis, is the outline of the evolution of Fabro's thought on *resolutio-reductio.* At this point, however, it is opportune to present Fabro's thought in a more systematic manner: first, summarizing Fabro's thought on the nature of *resolutio-reductio* as the proper method of metaphysical reflection; second, looking at his description of *resolutio-reductio* as a

movement of reason from *ens* to *esse*; third, considering the "types" of *resolutio* according to Fabro; and, finally, making some brief, critical observations in an evaluation of Fabro's theory.

1. The nature of *resolutio* according to Fabro

1.1 *Resolutio* as metaphysical method

Resolutio is repeatedly affirmed by Fabro as the *proper method* of metaphysical reflection:

- "The method of Thomistic metaphysics is […] 'resolutive'"[1];
- "The *reductio* (or *resolutio*) *ad unum* […] constitutes, fundamentally, the proper method of metaphysics[2];
- "The activity that unveils *esse* in Thomistic metaphysics has a unique character and could be called a *resolutio* that is proper to metaphysics"[3];
- *Esse* as *actus essendi* "has been discovered by the strictly metaphysical method of resolution or reduction (*per resolutionem* or *per reductionem*) […]. It has also been discovered by the method of the absolute reduction of the act of being by participation to the *esse per essentiam*"[4].

The textual bases for Fabro's affirmations about *resolutio* are *In Boethii De Trinitate*, q. 6, a. 1[5] and *De substantiis separatis*, ch. 9[6]. The first text develops *resolutio* as the method of metaphysics; the second refers to

[1] C. FABRO, *PC*, 66.

[2] C. FABRO, *PC*, 498. See *Ibid.*, *PC*, 519-520: "For this reason, the transferring of the term to the other member of the analogy is done in virtue of a resolutive-attributive judgment and therefore in the form of a transcending of predication and not of proper and direct comprehension".

[3] C. FABRO, "Existence", 724.

[4] C. FABRO, "The Intensive Hermeneutics…", 486.

[5] See C. FABRO, *Metaphysica*, Introductio, 32. No explanation of the precise meaning of the term "*resolutio*" is found in Fabro's *NMP*, and only in his *Metaphysica* do we learn that the Thomistic basis for his use of the term "*resolutio*" is, as we would expect, *In Boethii De Trinitate*, q. 6, a. 1.

[6] See C. FABRO, "La problematica dello *esse* tomistico", *TPM*, 110; "Il fondamento metafisico della IV via", *ET*, 403-404; "Il nuovo problema dell'essere e la fondazione della metafisica", 481-482.

resolutio as the means by which the main compositions of *ens* are distinguished, culminating in a resolution of all things into that-which-is and *esse*.

1.2 *Resolutio* and the judgment of separation

In clarifying what the method of *resolutio-reductio* is not, Fabro notes that the notion of intensive *esse* is not obtained by abstraction[7], the apprehension of *esse* is not "intuitive"[8] and that *resolutio* does not consist in judgment[9]. According to Fabro, the connection between judgment and *esse* made by St. Thomas in his early *Commentary on the Sentences* and *In Boethii De Trinitate* refers to *esse* as used in a judgment ("John *is* white") or to the being-in-act (*esse-in-actu*) of the essence or other forms and formalities and not properly or exclusively to *esse ut actus*. Furthermore, *resolutio* is not *separatio* (as understood by L.-B. Geiger). With regard to the use of the term "*separatio*" in connection with metaphysical method, we see that in Fabro's *Metaphysica*, *separatio* is not equated with a negative judgment about the materiality or separability of being, but rather is described as a "distinguishing" (a "separating") of the real or intentional oppositions we encounter in metaphysical reflection. Presumably, real distinctions are made in judgments of separation: for example, "Substance is not an accident" or "Matter is not form".

1.3 *Resolutio* and demonstration

In line with his position that *resolutio* involves argumentation and demonstration, but is not completely reducible to demonstration, the third edition of *NMP* (1963), Fabro replaces "intensive metaphysical *abstraction*" with "intensive metaphysical *reflection*"[10]. Of the role of demonstration

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[7] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 237.

[8] See C. FABRO, "Existence", 724.

[9] For an in-depth study of these points, see L. ROMERA, *Pensar el ser*, 100-130. See also J. VILLAGRASA, *Realismo metafísico e irrealidad*, 327: "[Fabro] niega que el ser como *actus essendi* sea percibido por el intelecto mediante la intuición y atribuye al juicio un papel muy limitado en la formación de este concepto. Critica a los tomistas – puede incluirse entre ellos a Maritain y a Gilson – por la reducción del acto de ser al concepto de existencia adquirido en el juicio".

[10] Possibly due to oversight, not every instance of "abstraction" was changed to "reflection". See *NMP*, 135, 136, 172 and 198.

within metaphysical *resolutio*, he writes: "[*Esse ipsum*] is obtained, for St. Thomas, by recourse to argumentation; […] bringing to light the originality of *esse* or demonstrating the real distinction between *esse* and essence in creatures and their identity in God"[11]. With regard to irreducibility of *resolutio* to demonstration, Fabro writes in *PC*: "The method of Thomistic metaphysics is neither intuitive or demonstrative, but 'resolutive', i.e., passing […] from multiple and superficial acts to […] the ultimate and primary act which is *esse*. This form of 'passing' is not demonstration or intuition, but could be called 'foundation'"[12]. Fabro specifies that the process of metaphysical *reductio*, is "a 'comprehensive reflection' which clarifies the being of *ens* in *esse* as originary act"[13]. In "Notes pour la fondation métaphysique de l'être" (1966), Fabro argues that *esse ut actus* is not discovered by experience which grasps the fact of existence, by demonstration which concerns the existence of God or by abstraction which grasps the essence[14]. At the same time, the comprehension of participated *esse* in *ens* involves the demonstration of God as first Cause and thus the dependence of *ens per participationem* with regard to *Esse per essentiam*[15]. Fabro concludes, however, that "the path that goes from the beings [*étants*] to *esse* is that of a *reductio ad principium* and a resolution to fundament, and not properly of a demonstration"[16]. This is reiterated in Fabro's article "L'*esse* tomistico e la ripresa della metafisica" (1967) in which he argues that the metaphysical process of foundation is not properly made initially through a demonstration, but rather by an initial reduction of act to act and, then, by a second foundation of participated *esse* on *Esse per essentiam* which does involve a demonstration[17].

1.4 *Resolutio* and argumentation

Along with the description of *resolutio* as a reflection and an argumentation that involves demonstration, Fabro often refers to the

[11] C. FABRO, "Existence", 724.
[12] C. FABRO, *PC*, 66.
[13] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 229.
[14] C. FABRO, "Notes pour la fondation métaphysique de l'être", *TPM*, 291-292.
[15] See C. FABRO, "Notes pour la fondation métaphysique de l'être", *TPM*, 313.
[16] C. FABRO, "Notes pour la fondation métaphysique de l'être", *TPM*, 314.
[17] C. FABRO, "L'*esse* tomistico e la ripresa della metafisica", 306.

dialectical nature of *resolutio*. This is emphasized by Fabro's use of terms such as "*dialectical* resolution", "*dialectical* emergence", "*dialectical* ascension" and "*dialectic* of participation". This means that *resolutio-reductio* is a process or passage of reason involving the comparison or contrast of two formalities, acts, principles or things which ends in the resolution of the couplet into one of the two members or in a superior principle. More specifically, the term "dialectic of participation" refers to this process of comparison and contrast within the predicamental and transcendental levels. On the predicamental level, this dialectic may take one of two paths: as we saw in *NMP*, it can refer to the dialectical ascension from individuals to species, from species to genera and from genera to the perfections proper to such genera; or, as we saw in *Metaphysica*, it can refer to the dialectical ascension from more superficial acts (accidental form) to more profound acts (substantial form). On the transcendental level, "dialectic of participation" is used in three different ways: to characterize the comparison of certain perfections with *esse*, to characterize the comparison of formalities with *esse* or to characterize the foundation of participated *esse* on *Esse per essentiam*. "Dialectic" is used instead of terms like "abstraction", since, according to Fabro, metaphysical reflection centers primarily on coming to a knowledge of an "act" that, unlike a "content", is not able to be abstracted.

1.5 *Resolutio* and analogy

At times, Fabro refers to the role of analogy in the "*reductio ad unum*" that is proper to metaphysical reflection and *resolutio*[18]. We have seen that Fabro gives the analogy of intrinsic attribution a "foundational priority" over the analogy of proportionality: the former stresses the causal *dependence* of *ens participatum* on *Esse per essentiam* while the latter stresses the *similarity* of creatures to God[19]. Referring to the analogy of intrinsic attribution, Fabro writes: "This is the *reductio* (or *resolutio*) *ad unum* that constitutes, fundamentally, the proper method of metaphysics,

[18] See C. FABRO, "The Intensive Hermeneutics…", 481: "The Thomistic notion of participation, founded in *esse* as supreme intensive act, makes it possible to pass from finite to Infinite Being through analogical discourse". *Ibid.*, 483-484: "Thus analogy of attribution accomplishes the ultimate 'resolution' of metaphysical discourse by relating the many to the One, the diverse to the Identical, and the composed to the Simple".

[19] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 504-516.

both in its expositive analysis (the forms and modes of predicamental being) and in its conclusive synthesis (*ens per participationem* and *esse per essentiam*)"[20]. Hence, for Fabro, St. Thomas's *reductio ad unum* has a twofold reference: the predicamental order of substance and accidents and the transcendental order of creation and God. In the metaphysical *reductio ad unum* which effected by means of analogy, the creature is called "*ens*" to the degree that it has *esse* and imitates the Creator (*Primum Ens*).

1.6 *Resolutio* and participation

Like analogy, the notion of participation plays a key role in Fabro's resolutive passage to intensive *esse*: "the passage from *esse commune* to intensive *esse* is effected through the notion of participation"[21]. Fabro concludes that the characteristic of "*ens per participationem*" presents created *ens* in its ultimate metaphysical resolution and that it is in this ultimate resolution that the creature's being and action are articulated in their ultimate and primary relationship to the Creator, who is *Esse per essentiam*[22]. Fabro hastens to note that this ultimate determination does not mean that the notion of "*ens per participationem*" is merely a *derived* metaphysical notion, of a merely *explicative* character or of a *secondary* nature (meaning that it is able to be used only after the demonstration of the existence of God), but rather that the metaphysical crux of the creature is linked to the dialectic of participation. The notion of participation is used in all three of the moments of the metaphysical determination of the relationship between the creature and God – the demonstration of the existence of God, the demonstration of creation and the demonstration of the composition of essence and *esse* – and not just the final moment[23].

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[20] C. FABRO, *PC*, 498.

[21] C. FABRO, "Existence", 723. See L. ROMERA, *Pensar el ser*, 96-97: "For Fabro, the Thomistic notion of *actus essendi* is fruit of the confluence of the concepts of being and of act, a confluence made possible within the horizon of the new concept of participation which Aquinas develops. Consequently, only from the key of Thomistic participation can one come to an authentic comprehension of *actus essendi*. The recourse to participation, […] is essential – in the opinion of our author – in order to achieve the ultimate (resolutive, most profound) philosophical expression of creation, thanks to which one acquires a precise vision of the real distinction of *esse* and *essentia* from which one avoids the *formalization* and *modalization* of being".

[22] See C. FABRO, "Sviluppo, significato e valore della *IV Via*", *ET*, 368.

[23] See C. FABRO, "Sviluppo, significato e valore della *IV Via*", *ET*, 369.

1.7 *Resolutio* and emergence

The importance of the notion of participation is also reflected in Fabro's use of the term "emergence". In *PP*, Fabro stated that the notion of "emergence" is founded on the notion of participation and adequately indicates the passage from one plane to the next. The term "emergence" is applied to the passage from form to the act of being or the passage from predicamental perfections and participations to transcendental ones. The apprehension of *esse*, he writes, occurs 'by emergence', whereby the concept of act is approached as a first principle and foundation"[24]. For Fabro, "emergence" means "logical or ontological priority" and is preferable to terms like "abstraction"[25].

1.8 *Resolutio* and causality

One last point concerns the relationship between *resolutio* and causality in Fabro's theory. We saw earlier that the threefold structure of the "resolution of act" (accidental form – substantial form – *actus essendi*) is articulated according to an increasingly universal causality (See I, q. 44, a. 2). For Fabro, the foundation of the causality of *esse* is the point of arrival of St. Thomas's philosophical historiography. In arguing this point in an article from 1974[26], Fabro turns to the text of *De substantiis separatis*, ch. 9, which in its itinerary toward the ultimate origin of things states that in the final stage it is necessary to posit a higher mode of "becoming" beyond that of substantial change. This higher mode of "becoming" involves the bestowal of *esse* itself to the entire universe (creation). Fabro connects the final stage with the formula of the Fourth Way in St. Thomas's *Commentary* on the *Prologus* to St. John's Gospel, thus making the reduction of participated *esse* to *Esse per essentiam* explicit.

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[24] C. FABRO, "Existence", 724.

[25] A possible explanation for this preference might lie in the fact that something that is abstracted is easily subject to formalization and conceptualization, while when we speak about "emergence" a reference is necessarily kept to the background against which or the foundation upon which something emerges.

[26] See C. FABRO, "Il nuovo problema dell'essere e la fondazione della metafisica", 481-482.

In summary, Fabro's theory on *resolutio* presents it as proper to argumentation-reflection and not abstraction or judgment. It is dialectical in nature and involves the notion of participation, the couplet act-potency, intrinsic and extrinsic causality, demonstration (existence of God, creation) and the doctrine of analogy.

2. *Resolutio* as a rational movement from *ens* to *esse*

For Fabro, the term "*resolutio*", when taken in its metaphysical sense, refers to the movement of reason in metaphysics from *ens* to *esse*, from an initial notion of *ens-esse* to an intensive notion of *esse*, from the effect (*ens per participationem*) to the ultimate cause and principle of all (*Ipsum Esse Subsistens*). Fabro often draws attention to the role of *ens* as *primum cognitum* in the fundament-foundation of human knowledge and the foundation of metaphysics. In this way, Fabro characterizes metaphysical reflection as a movement from *ens* to *esse* and from *esse* back to *ens*; or, in other words, a movement from *ens commune* to intensive *esse* and from *esse* back to *entia*[27]. The starting-point and end-point of Fabro's *resolutio* are *ens* and *esse* respectively. This is highlighted in J. Villagrasa's article on *resolutio* as the method of metaphysics according to Fabro (2001), where he notes that Fabro's philosophic project: "consists in bringing philosophy back to the foundation of metaphysics, and in metaphysics, carrying out the return or resolution of *ens* to its foundation, which is being, *esse ut actus*"[28] and that, "according to Fabro, the resolution itinerary goes from *ens commune* to intensive *esse*"[29]. With regard to *ens* as starting-point, L. Romera notes how Fabro's resolution to *actus essendi* relates to the initial, confused apprehension of *esse* within *ens* as *primum cognitum*[30]. At a debate

[27] See C. FABRO, "La problematica dell'*esse* tomistico", *TPM*, 131.

[28] J. VILLAGRASA, "La *resolutio* come metodo…", 36.

[29] J. VILLAGRASA, "La *resolutio* come metodo…", 53.

[30] L. ROMERA, *Pensar el ser*, 99-100: "The method (path, noetic itinerary) to arrive to *actus essendi*, does not consist in an intuition, not in a demonstrative process similar to formal thought, nor yet does knowledge of *esse* seem to correspond to a peculiar and proper intellectual operation; on the contrary, knowledge of *esse* is situated as the goal of a peculiar discursive process that Fabro calls *resolutive* or *foundational*. This entire process, nevertheless, presents a direct relationship with a certain initial apprehension. The path that the intellect runs in his metaphysical operation begins – if one wants to be faithful to the genuine thought of St. Thomas just as our author presents it – with a first emergence of *esse* thanks to a confused apprehension linked to the *primum cognitum*. Afterwards, one

held in 1972, Fabro spoke of resolution as radical reflection and as an itinerary: when asked how one arrives at or "touches" *esse*, Fabro responded by contrasting our apprehension of *ens* and the apprehension of esse, pointing out that we have a direct immediate experience (apprehension) of *ens* and that reflection on *ens* permits a certain *content* of being and *act* of being to emerge. This emergence of *actus essendi* is accomplished through *resolutio* as a movement from accidental acts and substantial acts to *esse*[31]. Metaphysics, then, is conceived of as a continual reflection on *ens qua ens*, culminating in the "dialectical emergence" of intensive *esse* and the articulation of the relationship between the creature's participated *actus essendi* and God (*Ipsum Esse Subsistens*) as Creator.

In his early *NMP* and other works, Fabro outlined how our notion of being progressively develops from an initial notion to a "methodological notion" and from this to an intensive notion of being, which is obtained by means of intensive metaphysical reflection[32]. A. Contat has proposed that these three main stages of Fabro's metaphysical reflection each involve an application of *resolutio-reductio*[33]: 1) There is an initial *resolutio* of *ens* into the common notion of *esse commune*. In this case, *esse* is understood merely as "act of *ens*"[34]. 2) A second stage concerns the structural or methodological notion of *esse*. Here, *esse* is no longer merely the "act of *ens*", but is considered in its relationship to essence and as the "actuality or realizing principle of essence"[35]. Proper to this stage is the certainty of a distinction between essence and *esse*. 3) The third stage is that of the resolution of *ens* into *Ipsum Esse Subsistens* and *esse participatum et*

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comes to a second intellectual emergence of *actus essendi*, which is fruit of the process of fundamentation of more superficial (accidental) acts into those that are more constant (substance) in order to resolve this into the most radical act (being)".

[31] See C. FABRO, "Dibattito congressuale", 393, 403, 407 and 411.

[32] See C. FABRO, *NMP*, 187-188.

[33] See A. CONTAT, Le figure della differenza ontologica…", 119: "This inventive itinerary should, however, be accompanied at each degree, by a corresponding 'reduction' or 'resolution', which makes appear the actuality proper to the epistemological level on which one finds themselves, and which evidences, in contrast, the correlative potentiality to that actuality".

[34] A. CONTAT, Le figure della differenza ontologica…", 120.

[35] See A. CONTAT, Le figure della differenza ontologica…", 120. Contat writes: "[O]ne undertakes a methodological *resolutio* of *ens*, within its quadripartition, in the Aristotelian couplet of οὐσία and of ἐνέργεια, interpreted by Fabro as couplet of *quidditas* and *esse in actu*".

inhaerens[36]. To this third stage belongs the notion of intensive *esse*, which is obtained by means of a *formal* resolution of participated perfection and a *real* resolution of actuating causality according to the principles of the Fourth Way and the demonstration of creation. At the end of this final resolution, the metaphysician understands that created *ens*, which receives its being from subsistent Being, is *ens per participationem* and that *ens per participationem* is "composed of a participant and of a participated, which oppose one another as potency and act; thus, created *ens* is composed of two co-principles, essence and the act of being, correlated as potency and act"[37].

In his article, "The Problematic of Thomistic *Esse*" (1959), Fabro expounds his notion of "intensive *esse*" more completely, determining it as the notion of the first and ultimate act, the most perfect and most formal act, and the most intimate and profound act[38]. With this notion of intensive *esse*, he highlights the originality of the Thomistic passage from *esse-in-actu* (existence; functional *esse*, formal *esse*) to *esse ut actus* and offers a solution to the problem of *subsistentia* as the mode of being proper to substance and to the problem of accidental *esse* (*inesse*)[39]." The passage from *esse-in-actu* to *esse ut actus* is effected by means of a "transcendental reduction", which determines God as *Ipsum Esse Subsistens* and the creature as a synthesis of essence and participated *esse*.

With regard to Fabro's thought on the gnoseological aspects of our knowledge of *esse*, we can summarize his thought as follows. In summary, Fabro argues for at least five stages in our knowledge of *esse*:

[1] Fabro specifies that the first contact with *esse* may be considered as an "implicit *perception*" of *esse* in the originary (explicit) apprehension of *ens*[40]. Fabro also uses the term "conjoint apprehension"[41] to speak about our initial experience of *esse* and the implicit *presence* of *esse*

[36] A. CONTAT, Le figure della differenza ontologica…", 120: "[F]inally one comes to the ultimate metaphysical *resolutio* of *ens* into the double opposition between *Esse subsistens* and *esse inhaerens*, the latter being *esse ut actus* limited by *essentia*, namely intensive being".

[37] A. CONTAT, "Le figure della differenza ontologica…", 121.

[38] See C. FABRO, "La problematica dello *esse* tomistico", *TPM*, 110-112.

[39] See A. CONTAT, "Le figure della differenza ontologica…", 125-127.

[40] See C. FABRO, "Notes pour la fondation métaphysique de l'être", *TPM*, 312. C. Ferraro, "La conoscenza dell'*ens* e dell'*esse*…", 92.

[41] See C. FABRO, "The Transcendentality of *Ens-Esse*…", 425: "Just as the *notio entis* is a synthesis of content and act, so also it is a certain ineffable form of 'conjoint apprehension' of content on the part of the mind and of act on the part of experience".

in *ens* as *primum cognitum*. In the apprehension of *ens*, the "content" (essence) is apprehended by the mind, while the "act" is apprehended through experience[42]. With regard to the *locus intentionalis* of *esse*, Fabro argues that the initial grasping of reality insofar as it is in act, "stands poles apart from abstraction and cannot be an object of abstracting reflection properly so-called, but only of direct and immediate apprehension"[43]. Fabro also points out the problems connected to a solution that holds that our knowledge of *esse* in the *primum cognitum* belongs to judgment[44]. In "*L'uomo e il rischio di* Dio" (1967)[45] Fabro speaks at length of the initial presence of *esse* in the initial grasp of *ens* and affirms that apprehension of *esse* in *ens* is not something abstract and derived, but rather, concrete and primary. *Esse*, however, is not grasped in its fullness and purity, since then we would have the direct apprehension or intuition of God who is *Ipsum Esse Subsistens*. According to St. Thomas we apprehend *ens* and not properly *esse*: in *ens*, however, *esse* is included as its act. Fabro offers the example that just as in apprehending *ambulans* we apprehend *ambulare*, so also in apprehending *ens*, we apprehend *esse*. Calling this an *implicit* apprehension, in Fabro's opinion, does not quite express what occurs in the apprehension since, "as I can apprehend (perceive) *ambulans* insofar as I perceive its *ambulare*, so I perceive *ens*, perceiving *esse*". *Esse*, then, lies hidden in *ens* and is discovered in metaphysics by means of a return to *ens*, which reveals its foundation on emergent *esse*. In this way, *esse* is a *prius* given in the beginning in *ens*, *primum cognitum*, but is only discovered explicitly at the end[46].

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[42] C. FABRO, "The Transcendentality of *Ens-Esse*…", 424-425: "[T]he *notio entis* is a synthesis of content and act, so also it is a certain ineffable form of "conjoint apprehension" of content on the part of mind and of act on the part of experience: […] the experience of the simultaneous awareness of the being-in-act of the world in relation to consciousness and of the actuation of consciousness in its turning to the world".

[43] C. FABRO, "The Transcendentality of *Ens-Esse*…", 425.

[44] See also C. FABRO, "Il nuovo problema dell'essere…" (1974), 501-503, for a critique of the position that holds that judgment is the means by which we grasp *esse*.

[45] See C. FABRO, *L'uomo e il rischio di Dio*, 371: "Consciousness grasps the being in act of *ens* and grasps its own being in act to the degree it grasps the being of its own act of knowing: none of these [three] *esse* are yet the *esse*, which is the profound trans-phenomenal act, but all three conspire toward it and the mind aspires to found it in metaphysical reflection or reduction".

[46] See C. FABRO, *Dall'essere all'esistente*, 62-65.

[2] There is a phenomenological, pre-philosophical stage which considers *esse* as existence and in a non-problematic way. One may speak of a phenomenological difference between the nature or essence of something and its factual existence.

[3] There is an initial notion of *esse* that is ontic and descriptive, yet, in a certain sense, proper to metaphysics. For Fabro, this *esse* is grasped in an indirect, explicit apprehension and as the act of the content of the real. This act of *ens* can refer to any reality, actuality or formality (real or logical) insofar as it is in act.

[4] A second *metaphysical* notion of *esse* is called the "methodological notion". Here, *esse* expresses the actuation or realization of the essence in any order. This notion, I would argue, seems to imply at least a confused notion of the real distinction between essence and *esse*. The apprehension, at this stage, is still both indirect and explicit[47].

[5] Finally, a direct apprehension of "intensive *esse*" is obtained by means of metaphysical reflection and argumentation which determines the metaphysical relationship between *esse* and essence in finite *ens* and between *esse participatum* and *Ipsum Esse Subsistens*. In *PC*[48], Fabro

[47] See C. FABRO, "Notes pour la fondation métaphysique de l'être", *TPM*, 312-313. See C. Ferraro, "La conoscenza dell'*ens* e dell'*esse*…", 93: "[S]i afferma che quest'apprensione è detta indiretta, sebbene esplicita. L'afferramento indicato è esplicito, perché se l'*esse* non è afferrato nella prima apprensione dell'*ens*, poi non lo si potrà raggiungere mai più. Poi, è esplicito anche perché, appunto, costitutivo dell'intelligibilità stessa dell'ente in quanto tale, che viene 'letto' attraverso il suo atto, come l'uomo che canta è *cantante*, in quanto nominato e visto attraverso la sua azione di cantare. Ma è indiretto, perché non è un afferramento isolato, ma anche velato, in un certo senso, in quanto 'mediato' dal soggetto portante l'atto di essere. Per questa ragione, sebbene esplicito, l'afferramento dell'*actus essendi* dell'*ens* nell'*ens* è indiretto e quindi non permette, nella prima apprensione, vedere l'emergenza propria che spetta all'*esse ut actus*. La determinazione (e 'isolamento') nozionale dell'*esse* pone un problema ulteriore la cu soluzione appartiene non già all'ambito dell'esperienza diretta, ma al campo della riflessione metafisica".

[48] In a recent article on Fabro's theory concerning our knowledge of *ens* and *esse*, C. Ferraro points out that in *PC* Fabro struggles somewhat to find a satisfactory term to characterize correctly our grasp of *esse* in the initial notion of *ens* and our grasp of *esse* at the end of metaphysical reflection. See C. FERRARO, "La conoscenza dell'*ens* e dell'*esse*…", 91. Commenting on *PC*, 65-66, Ferraro writes: "Il testo è assai tormentato. È evidente, infatti, che Fabro non ha trovato ancora una terminologia soddisfacente e che non riesce ad esprimere se non con dei

admits that the passage to *esse* as *actus essendi* involves "a certain experience or direct apprehension"[49]. One can even speak of this point of arrival as an "implicit intuition"[50]. This determination of *esse* is achieved through metaphysical reflection and a reduction to fundament[51]. It is in this reflexive comprehension that Fabro speaks of the possibility of an "experience" of *esse*. The comprehension of the *esse* of finite *ens* as participated is accomplished though the demonstration of God as first Cause and the doctrine of creation with its explanation of the dependence of *ens per participationem* on *Esse per essentiam*[52]. In *Dall'essere all'esistente*, Fabro introduces his thesis that even though *esse* cannot be "conceptualized" like other concepts, it can be said to be "apprehended"[53].

3. Types of *resolutio* according to Fabro

In Fabro's thought, three main "types" of *resolutio* may be distinguished, each of which ends in *esse*:

[1] formal resolution that ends in the notion of "formal intensive *esse*";
[2] the real resolution of act that ends in participated *actus essendi*;
[3] the ultimate resolution-reduction to fundament that ends in *Ipsum Esse Per Se Subsistens*.

[1] Formal resolution: Fabro is one of the few Thomists to employ a "formal resolution-reduction of participated perfection" within metaphysics. For Fabro, metaphysics not only considers the three principal compositions of created *ens* (substance-accidents, matter-form, essence-*esse*), but also

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giri di parole quel che forse le parole finora usate non riescono a riferire. Una 'apprensione diretta' richiama, a quanto pare, immediatamente la nozione d'intuizione. Tuttavia è chiaro che i *principia rerum* non possono essere oggetto d'intuizione diretta per un intelletto come il nostro, che si attua in dipendenza dalla materia quantificata e dalla sensitività".

[49] C. FABRO, *PC*, 66.

[50] C. FABRO, *PC*, 66.

[51] See C. FABRO, "Notes pour la fondation métaphysique de l'être", *TPM*, 313.

[52] See C. FABRO, "Notes pour la fondation métaphysique de l'être", *TPM*, 313.

[53] See C. FABRO, *Dall'essere all'esistente*, 65-66. On page 61 speaks of an "experience" of *esse* as a "direct and proper apprehension".

includes a "dialectical ascension of participation" from the individual's participation in a species to the participated perfections proper to the species' genus and a dialectical reflection on perfection (for example, the relationship of *esse* to *vivere* and *intelligere*). This formal reduction or resolution ascends along the line of the participated participation and ends in *esse* as "formal plexus of all perfection"[54]. Towards the end of his first article on the Fourth Way, Fabro refers to "formal resolution", and notes that although one undertakes a resolution of participated perfection to *ipsum esse*, one does not yet does not demonstrate that this *ipsum esse* actually or really exists[55]. The demonstration of the existence of *Ipsum Esse Subsistens* is the task of what Fabro calls a "definitive metaphysical *resolutio*" (which includes the *resolutio* of act and the reduction to foundation).

The Fabrian distinction between "formal resolution" and the "resolution of act" has been commented on by L. Romera in Chapter Nine of his *Pensar el ser*. Romera considers the twofold path of resolution to intensive *esse* outlined in *NMP*[56] and notes how the two dialectical, resolutive paths converge and how *PC* presents the same paths according to Fabro's more mature thought. Romera elaborates on the two paths of *NMP* according to the Scholastic distinction between *esse essentiae* and *esse existentiae*, while the text he quotes from *PC* uses the terms *actus formalis* and *actus essendi*. "By means of the first [path], one comes to the notion of *ipsum esse* as eminent synthesis of all forms and perfections. By means the second one achieves *esse subsistens*, pure subsistent act"[57]. According to Romera, Fabro's works primarily center on and develop the first as the means by which we grasp the intensive notion of being.

[54] See 6.2.4.1 for a more in-depth look at Fabro's formal resolution.

[55] C. FABRO, "Sviluppo, significato e valore della *IV Via*", *ET*, 379: "Thus, the terminus of this first phase of the dialectic is of a formal, non-real character".

[56] L. ROMERA, *Pensar el ser*, 260: "Es decir, al *actus essendi* intensivo se llega siguiendo un doble camino: el primero, centrado en la consideración del *esse* en abstracto, gira en torno a la noción de *esse essentiae*, para alcanzar la noción de *esse maximum formale*. El segundo, considerando al *esse* en concreto, se dirige por la vía del acto del singular, hacia la determinación del ser come acto de todo acto; para entonces verlo como acto propio de cualquier formalidad, come el acto más perfecto del ente, pero que sin embardo permanece imperfecto en comparación al ser que actúa una formalidad superior".

[57] L. ROMERA, *Pensar el ser*, 261.

[2] Resolution of act: We have seen that Fabro repeatedly calls attention to threefold structure of the resolution of act[58]: there is an initial resolution from accidental acts and forms to substantial form and a subsequent resolution from substantial form to the act of being. This resolution corresponds in large part to the phases of the history of metaphysics outlined in several Thomistic texts (See I, q. 44, a. 2; *De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 5; *De substantiis separatis*, ch. 9) and recently emphasized in the work of J. Aertsen, R. te Velde and J. Villagrasa[59].

[3] Resolution-reduction to fundament: The *resolutio* of act is continued in a reduction to fundament, a reduction of participated *actus essendi* to *Esse per essentiam*. In *PC*, Fabro argues that metaphysics resolves and reduces every relation of causality into the dialectic of participation[60] and that the relationship of the creature to the Creator is only able to be understood and expressed in the "dialectical formula of analogy", which, in turn, refers to the creature's situation of total dependence according to participation[61]. By means of metaphysical reflection created *ens* and *esse participatum* are ultimately founded on *Ipsum Esse Subsistens*.

4. Evaluation of Fabro's proposal

In this section, I would like to point out six aspects of Fabro's thought on resolution which I think can be improved upon and further developed in light of the work of other Thomists on *resolutio* and metaphysics.

First, an important contextualization is missing in Fabro's work on resolution, namely, the interplay between *intellectus* and *ratio* in the progress of human knowledge[62]. Our intellect is discursive and moves

[58] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 66; "Dibattito congressuale", 403; "The Intensive Hermeneutics…", 486; *IST*, 178 (Thesis XLV).

[59] J. AERTSEN, *Nature and Creature*, 191-201; *Ibid*., "La scoperta dell'ente in quanto ente", 41-42. R. TE VELDE, *Participation and Substantiality*, 134-146; *Ibid*., *Aquinas on God*, 132-138. J. VILLAGRASA, "Creazione e *actus essendi*. L'originalità della metafisica di Tommaso d'Aquino", in *Creazione e* actus essendi. *Originalità e interpretazioni della metafisica di Tommaso d'Aquino*, Edizioni ART, Roma 2008, 83-137.

[60] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 222-224.

[61] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 508-509.

[62] *De Veritate*, q. 10, a. 8 ad 10: "Haec autem circulatio attenditur in hoc quod ratio ex principiis secundum viam inveniendi in conclusiones pervenit, et conclusiones inventas in principia resolvendo examinat secundum viam iudicandi". The theme of *intellectus* and *ratio* in connection with *resolutio* is fully developed

between two intellections: between the immediate evidence of the first notions and first principles and the mediate evidence of scientific conclusions, obtained by means of resolution to principles[63]. With this contextualization, the gnoseological aspects of Fabro's theory can be improved upon by giving attention to the intellectual status of *ens* as *primum cognitum* and the status of *esse ut actus* in the mind at the end of the resolutive process.

A second point concerns the distinction between resolution as used in a logical context and "metaphysical resolution"[64]. Some of St. Thomas's texts deal with resolution in the sense of logical analysis and a reduction of judgments to first principles, while other texts refer to the reduction to first causes through intrinsic or extrinsic causality. Fabro's work on *resolutio* concentrates almost exclusively on the latter. Among the Thomists who draw attention to the distinction is J. Aertsen, who, in his article entitled "Method and Metaphysics. The *via resolutionis* in Thomas Aquinas" (1989), distinguishes "logical resolution" ("judicative analysis" or the

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in R. SAIZ-PARDO HURTADO, *Intelecto-razón en Tomás de Aquino Aproximación noética a la metafísica*, Edizioni Università della Santa Croce, Roma 2005.

[63] J. VILLAGRASA, "La *resolutio* come metodo…", 47-48. See also G. COTTIER, "*Intellectus et ratio*", *Revue Thomiste* 88 (1988), 215-228.

[64] See E. SWEENEY, "Three Notions of *Resolutio* and the Structure of Reasoning in Aquinas", *The Thomist* 58 (1994), 227-228: "The 'reduction' of syllogisms to the first figure is just one kind of 'judgment'; when the subject is arguments, one 'resolves' to the first principles of argumentation (the first figure), but when the subject is physics or metaphysics, one 'resolves' to the first principles of those disciplines. […] Whether following the chain of intrinsic or extrinsic causes, reason is still moving toward what is higher, simpler, and more universal, not downward to parts of some whole. That is, we can resolve to the principle of non-contradiction for propositions, the first figure of the syllogism for arguments, and being and the properties of being, and God and the separate substances within metaphysics. For Aquinas, in all these orders, having *scientia* of something consists not merely in knowing it but rather in knowing it in or *resolving* it into its higher and simpler principles and causes; when we resolve into higher causes and principles not merely relatively but *per se*, i.e., to God, we have not mere *scientia* but rather wisdom". See J. J. SANGUINETI, "Il triplice senso della *resolutio* in san Tommaso", 130: "Possiamo denominare *logico.noetica* la *resolutio-compositio* che parte e ritorna ai primi principi più evidenti, come per esempio il principio di non contraddizione, o di causalità, o per quanto riguarda la morale i principi della sinderesi. La *resolutio-compositio* che invece completa il circolo di andata e ritorno ai principi ultimi reali (Dio come causa ultima creatrice, come fine ultimo della moralità, ecc.) è *ontologica*",

"resolution of demonstration") from metaphysical resolution in St. Thomas's thought and offers textual support for this distinction. Although it is not *specific* to metaphysics, logical resolution is related to metaphysics in a special manner since it belongs to metaphysics to consider the "first logical principles" and since the first principle of the second operation of the intellect is founded on the *intellectus entis* (the understanding of being)[65]. With regard to metaphysical resolution proper, Aertsen places it within the context of the difference between "reason" (*ratio*) and "intellect" (*intellectus*). The rational process of the mind (*via compositionis vel inventionis*) begins from intellectual consideration, yet following the way of resolution (*secundum viam resolutionis*), also *terminates* in intellectual consideration insofar as reason gathers one simple truth from many things[66].

A third point for improvement concerns the relationship between *resolutio* and the transcendentals. I noted earlier that Fabro's references to resolution in connection with the transcendentals are, at times, confusing: it seems that Fabro inadvertently mixes *additio* with *resolutio*[67]. To my knowledge, the method proper to the derivation or foundation of the transcendentals has yet to be developed by Thomistic thinkers[68]. J. Aertsen has provided some insight: "The method of resolution is central to Thomas's account of the transcendentals in *De Veritate*, q. 1, a. 1. In this basic text he pursues a resolution of knowledge in which the concepts of the intellect are reduced to being as the first conception"[69]. I would suggest that the theme of convertibility could be formulated and expounded in terms of *resolutio* or *reductio*[70]. Another suggestion comes from the fact that *bonum* and *ens* are

[65] See J. AERTSEN, "Method and Metaphysics…", 408-409.

[66] See J. AERTSEN, "Method and Metaphysics…", 410.

[67] See C. FABRO, "The Transcendentality of *Ens-Esse*…", 407-409.

[68] St. Thomas affirms in *In Boethii De Trinitate*, q. 6, a. 1 that *resolutio secundum rationem* comes to the consideration of *ens* and that which belongs to being as such (namely, the transcendentals).

[69] J. AERTSEN, *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals*, 135. Another aspect of the problem concerns the connection, pointed out by Aertsen, between *resolutio secundum rationem* and "commonness by predication" (*In Boethii De Trinitate*, q. 5, a. 4) (p. 134-135).

[70] A good example of the reduction of *bonum* to *ens* is found in I, q. 5, a. 1: "Ratio enim boni in hoc consistit, quod aliquid sit appetibile, unde philosophus, in I ethic., dicit quod bonum est quod omnia appetunt. Manifestum est autem quod unumquodque est appetibile secundum quod est perfectum, nam omnia appetunt suam perfectionem. Intantum est autem perfectum unumquodque, inquantum est

identical *secundum rem*, but differ *secundum rationem*, meaning that the *resolutio* proper to the articulation of the transcendentals is that of *secundum rationem*[71]. In this *resolutio*, I do not move from one thing to another to affirm that all being is good, but rather I find that all being is good to some degree and that a being's goodness is proportional to its degree of being. With regard to the "theological foundation" of the transcendentals, the proper method would be *resolutio secundum rem* as we are dealing with an attempt to articulate the causal-participative relationship between a creature's goodness and God as *Summum Bonum* and final cause of all.

Fourthly, although Fabro was one of the few Thomists to insist on *resolutio* as the method of Thomistic metaphysics in the period from 1950 to 1980[72], Fabro does not explicitly refer to the Thomistic distinction between *resolutio secundum rationem* and *resolutio secundum rem*. The first *resolutio* ends in the consideration of *ens* by means of intrinsic causes and while the second ends in knowledge of the ultimate cause of *ens qua ens* by means of extrinsic causes[73]. These two resolutions correspond to the analysis of the subject of metaphysics (*secundum rationem*: *ens qua ens*) and the attainment of the goal (*secundum rem: Causa Ultima*) of metaphysics[74]. At best, I would argue, a *quasi*-distinction is present when Fabro speaks about a first moment of metaphysical reflection which consists in a resolution of perfection and act (intrinsic to *ens*) and a second moment which consists in a *reductio* to fundament (extrinsic to created *ens*).

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actu, unde manifestum est quod intantum est aliquid bonum, inquantum est ens, esse enim est actualitas omnis rei".

[71] THOMAS AQUINAS, I, q. 5, a. 1: "Bonum et ens sint idem secundum rem, quia tamen differunt secundum rationem".

[72] See J. VILLAGRASA, "La *resolutio* come metodo…", 37: "According to Fabro, *resolutio* is the proper method of metaphysics. He is aware that it is a notion that was almost completely forgotten by the Western rationalistic tradition, which considered it a merely logical method and ignored the richness implicit in its medieval use. Fabro denies that such a notion refers to a merely logical procedure (logical analysis); rather he calls it 'a return to fundament', a foundation in the principle. Although *resolutio* is one of the most important and personal methodological contributions of St. Thomas, in general the Thomists of the XX Century were occupied with 'abstraction', 'separation', some with '*reditio*' or '*reflexio*' and, among the few that were occupied with '*resolutio*', the principal representative is Cornelio Fabro".

[73] See *In Boethii De trinitate*, q. 6, a.1.

[74] See J. VILLAGRASA, "La *resolutio* come metodo…", 49-52.

Villagrasa notes that Fabro's use of *resolutio* and of the term "intensive *esse*" does not always clearly distinguish "participated, intensive *esse*" (*esse ut actus*) from "infinite or separated *esse*" (*Ipsum Esse Subsistens*). In Aquinas, Villagrasa writes, the two points of arrival are clearly distinct because there are two ways of resolution[75]: "The *resolutio secundum rationem* is the reduction of a thing into its intrinsic causes or constitutive principles – which are not really 'another thing' or 'separated things' –; the *resolutio secundum rem* seeks the extrinsic causes, which, instead, are 'another thing'"[76]. Following the interpretation of Aertsen, Villagrasa notes that the former ends in *ens* and in the ultimate form by which something is (*esse*), while the latter ends in the common cause of all, God. "The terms of the two resolutions are intrinsically and 'logically' connected, since one is the subject of metaphysics (*ens*) and the other is the cause of *ens qua ens* (God). God is not *esse commune*, but rather its cause"[77]. The two resolutions also correspond to one another since it is not until being is considered as being that the causality proper to creation is recognized. Aertsen, in his 1996 book on the transcendentals, connects the two forms of resolution to two forms of commonness distinguished by St. Thomas in *In Boethii De Trinitate*, q. 5, a. 4: commonness by predication and commonness by causality. Aertsen writes:

> This correspondence might be confusing at first sight, since both resolutions proceed by the analysis of causes. Yet it makes sense to related resolution *secundum rem* to causal commonness and resolution *secundum rationem* to commonness by predication. The former is an analysis of extrinsic causes and a reduction to the most universal cause. In q. 5 art. 4, Thomas had worked out only causal commonness by tracing the hierarchy of causes. Resolution *secundum rationem* is an analysis of intrinsic causes and a reduction to the most general form. The end-term of this process is "being", that is, that which is predicated of all things. That resolution *secundum rationem* is concerns commonness by predication does not compromise its metaphysical character, for the analysis is carried out to the ultimate form, by which something is being. There exists an intrinsic connection between this resolution and resolution *secundum rem*, for the latter reduction is the reduction to the cause of being as being[78].

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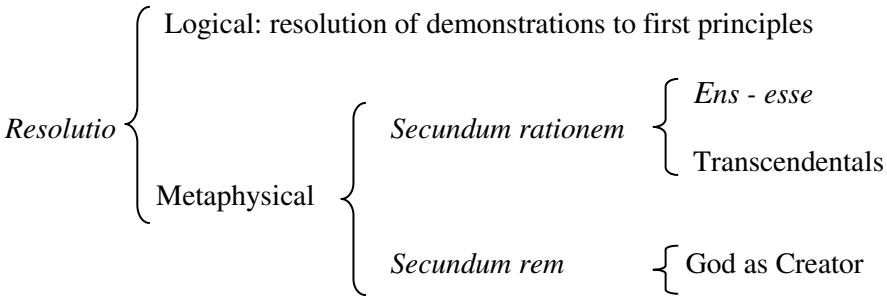
[75] See J. VILLAGRASA, "La *resolutio* come metodo…", 54.

[76] J. VILLAGRASA, "La *resolutio* come metodo…", 61.

[77] J. VILLAGRASA, "La *resolutio* come metodo…", 62. See J. AERTSEN, "Method and Metaphysics…", 416.

[78] J. AERTSEN, *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals*, 134-135.

In a footnote, Aertsen observes that for St. Thomas, *ens* implies a relationship of formal cause (either inherent or extrinsic-exemplary)[79]. Now, because the intrinsic formal cause is act, Aertsen specifies further on that the ultimate form to which *resolutio secundum rationem* comes is the act of being (*esse*), the formal principle whereby a thing is *ens*[80]. This intrinsic analysis and "inner resolution" is the condition for *resolutio secundum rem* and the ascent to God as the most universal cause of being. In this *resolutio* "the origin of being in general is understood as creation and explained in terms of participation"[81]. In synthesis, we have the following outline of *resolutio* for Aertsen:



Villagrasa proposes that by distinguishing the two resolutions in an explicit way, Fabro's metaphysics can gain greater rigor and clarity. *Resolutio secundum rationem* deals with the predicamental participations (substance and accidents, matter and form) and the transcendental participation of essence and *esse*, which are explained as intrinsic principles and according to the composition of act and potency. *Resolutio secundum rem* founds the participated perfections in the separate perfection, the real extrinsic cause of the participants[82].

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[79] See I, q. 5, a. 2 ad 2: "Ens autem non importat habitudinem causae nisi formalis tantum, vel inhaerentis vel exemplaris, cuius causalitas non se extendit nisi ad ea quae sunt in actu".

[80] J. AERTSEN, *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals*, 394-395.

[81] J. AERTSEN, *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals*, 394-395.

[82] See J. VILLAGRASA, "La *resolutio* come metodo…", 65. For his part, Romera draws attention to how the ultimate fundament can be considered in two ways, both insofar as it is intrinsic and insofar as it is transcendent. See L. ROMERA, *Pensar el ser*, 97-98: "The Thomistic concept of *actus essendi*, when it is understood in all the speculative force it has in Thomas Aquinas, is constituted in

As a fifth point for improvement, I point out that Fabro does not develop the theme of the relationship between *resolutio* as method of metaphysics and the role of *separatio* in the constitution of the *genus subiectum* of metaphysics. I have argued that Fabro's theory on the constitution of metaphysics consists in a continual analysis of the terms of movement *sub ratione entis*. When Fabro speaks of *separatio* as method of metaphysics in his *Metaphysica*, he does not refer to a demonstration of the existence of immaterial being, but rather to the procedure proper to metaphysics of "distinguishing" (separating) the real or intentional oppositions we encounter in metaphysical reflection (in opposition to "abstraction"). In the *Epilogue* to *Metaphysica*, Fabro places "*separatio*" within the context of the ultimate reduction of participated *esse* to *Esse per essentiam* and not within the context of an initial demonstration of immaterial being.

The employment of *resolutio* (analysis) in the constitution of the *genus subiectum* of metaphysics has been elaborated on by R. te Velde and J. Aertsen. In his *Aquinas on God* (2006), R. te Velde argues that *resolutio* is not limited to a process within a science, but is also employed in the transition from physics to metaphysics[83]. Aertsen's *Nature and Creature*

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the resolutive point of metaphysics, since in being as act one finds the ultimate fundament of reality, the final objective of every investigation of first philosophy. For our author, the ultimate (radical) fundament has a twofold perspective: on the one hand, the fundament is the radical act of *ens* which constitutes it as *ens* (intrinsic moment); on the other hand, the fundament refers to the first source of this act (transcendent moment). The notion of *actus essendi*, in Fabro, fulfills the twofold demand of referring to the radical act of created *ens*, indicating the intrinsic and constitutive fundament of *ens*, and of applying to God, designating the transcendent and causal Fundament of reality according to the most elevated expression to which man, with his reason, is able to come (God as *Ipsum esse subsistens*). This twofold metaphysical exigency is fulfilled thanks to the application of the dialectic of participation to *esse*, by means of which Fabro comes to the notion of *intensive being*".

[83] R. TE VELDE, *Aquinas on God*, 54-55: "Physics studies reality under a particular aspect, while metaphysics proceeds to a universal consideration of being as being by transcending the particular perspective of physics. This passing over from physics to metaphysics happens by way of *resolutio*. *Resolutio* names the process of reason by which the composed sensible whole, which is better known to us, is reduced to its simple principles and causes, which are better known in themselves. […] Physics considers being in a particular manner, as being *this* or being *such*. By way of resolution the particular object of physics is resolved into

(1988) argues that there is a resolution proper to physics, which undertakes a resolution of *movement* to its intrinsic and extrinsic causes[84], and a resolution proper to metaphysics, which undertakes a resolution of *being* to its causes[85]. He holds that the transition from physics to metaphysics is accomplished by a continual analysis of mobile *ens*[86].

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the universal object of metaphysics […]. In this manner the transition of the physical consideration of being as nature (form and matter) to the metaphysical consideration of being as such is enacted by way of a reflection insofar as thought comes to realize that its object of physical consideration is indeed a particular mode of being, not coinciding with being as such".

[84] J. AERTSEN, *Nature and Creature*, 269-270: "The resolution of movement towards the immobile, of multiplicity towards unity can be summed up as follows. First, movement was reduced to the intrinsic principle and terminus: matter and form, causes that relate to each other as potency and act. This hodology *is* nature. Next, movement was reduced to the extrinsic causes: the active principle, the agent, and the end. The end is ruled by the law of synonymy and by perpetuity. That requires a hierarchy of movers characteristized by an increasing degree of immobility. In this cosmic order the celestial bodies occupy a place of importance. Their movement is reducible to an ultimate, metaphysical cause, God. In this summary the essential coherence between nature and ontology comes to the fore. The phenomenon of movement is to be understood from the duality of matter and form. Both are nature. With the originality of nature corresponds a 'first philosophy' which in its ontology and aitiology remains bound to this origin. In a world realizing itself by nature, everything turns on the 'what,' for everything 'revolves about the specific essence which is unchangeable. The formal cause of being is 'something divine' in things. For the first principle is the Unmoved Mover, pure form and act, which initiates the natural movement towards perfection".

[85] See J. AERTSEN, *Nature and Creature*, 271-278. "In the resolution of being, certain principles of the reduction of movement are continued. Such a continuation is possible because the analysis of movement, too, came to the metaphysical" (p. 275).

[86] See J. AERTSEN, "La scoperta dell'ente in quanto ente", 46: "L'oggetto della metafisica viene scoperto, non tramite dimostrazione dell'esistenza di enti immateriali, ma tramite l'analisi continua degli enti materiali. L'ilemorfismo – la composizione di forma e materia – può spiegare il *tipo di essere* che le cose materiali possiedono ma non spiega il loro *essere in quanto tale*. È dunque necessario un altro modo di considerare le cose materiali, e in questo processo si scopre l'oggetto della metafisica. La comprensione radicale della questione dell'origine è decisiva per la scoperta dell'ente in quanto ente. L'origine dell'ente in quanto tale supera il livello del divenire (cambiamento, moto) in natura".

Lastly, a sixth point for improvement concerns the resolution proper to the later stages of Fabro's metaphysical reflection. In my opinion, the latter could be better articulated according to the method of resolution *secundum rem* by attending to the following elements: the threefold nature of extrinsic causality (efficient, exemplary and final); the distinction between the *quia* demonstration for the existence of God and the demonstration for creation, and the use of the *triplex via* in our analogical knowledge of God's nature. Instead of using the Scholastic division of the treatise on creation into creation, conservation, divine motion and divine providence, a more effective division – which agrees with a resolution to ultimate causes – could be the division according to the triadic structure of the causality of creation: efficient causality (*productio*), exemplary causality (*distinction*) and final causality (*conservatio et gubernatio*)[87].

[87] See R. TE VELDE, *Aquinas on God*, 125-126: "In the three aspects of the act of creation it is not difficult to recognize a reference to Aristotle's analysis of the manifold senses of cause. The aspect of *production* is unmistakably associated with the efficient cause (*causa efficiens*); the *distinction* refers to the extrinsic formal cause (*causa exemplaris*, and the couple *preservation/government* is related to the final cause (*causa finalis*). […] Creation should be understood in the first place as *producere in esse*, bringing forth into existence, or as a making (*facere*). […] The other two aspects of *distinctio* and *conservatio/gubernatio* pertain to the way the divine agent relates to the effect. In determining the nature of the relationship between agent and effect Thomas lets himself be guided by two principles. First, every agent acts through a form (*omne agens agit secundum formam*) and second, every agent acts for the sake of an end (*omne agens agit propter finem*)".

Chapter Seven

THE STRUCTURE OF METAPHYSICAL REFLECTION

This chapter outlines the basic structure of Fabro's metaphysical reflection that our study has brought to light[1]. I use the term "structure" to refer to the arrangement of parts in an organic whole. I hasten to add that my structuring of Fabro's indications should not be thought of as a rigid step-by-step program, but rather as something flexible that allows the metaphysician to proceed in a quasi-concentric way and that permits a continual deepening in our understanding of *ens in quantum est ens* and its properties through its ultimate causes[2].

First, one of the most basic and comprehensive structures of metaphysical reflection, to which Fabro often refers, is that of the passage from the first notion of *ens-esse* to the methodological-proportional notion of *ens-esse* and from this to the intensive, terminal notion of *esse*. This itinerary is outlined in *La nozione metafisica di partecipazione* (1939)[3], *Metaphysica* (1949)[4], "La problematica dell'*esse* tomistico" (1959)[5] and *Partecipazione e causalità* (1954-1960)[6]. The passage from one stage to

[1] In order to determine Fabro's thought on particular problems, this chapter contains two chronological summaries of the evolution of Fabro's thought: on the way in which *ens* as *primum cognitum* is grasped (1.1) and on the argument for the real distinction (3.1). It also contains a chronological summary of the principal Thomistic theories on creation and participation (4.2.3.1).

[2] See C. FABRO, "Notes pour la fondation métaphysique de l'être", *TPM*, 312: "The itinerary of this discovery and foundation of *esse* is not linear, *more geometrico*, but quasi-concentric, by successive deepened study of the first and constitutive perception which is given by thought as such".

[3] See C. FABRO, *NMP*, 187-188.

[4] See C. FABRO, *Metaphysica*, Introductio, 42-44.

[5] See C. FABRO, "La problematica dello *esse* tomistico", *TMP*, 107-109.

[6] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 65: "Between the first notion of *ens* at the dawn of knowing, and the technical one of *esse* of metaphysical *resolutio*, there is at least a double passage: above all from the initial confused notion of *ens* in general, to the methodological notion of *ens* as *id quod est, quod habet esse*. Aristotle stops here, while St. Thomas proceeds to the determination of *esse* as the ultimate transcendental act, which is the proper and immediate object of divine causality".

another is accomplished by means of resolution, the notion of participation[7] and analogical discourse. When interpreting these texts, it is important to distinguish between those that refer to the progress of our intellect from the initial notion of *ens* to the notion of intensive *esse* and those that begin with our "metaphysical reflection" on *esse commune* and end in the notion of intensive *esse*. In both cases, the notion of *ens-esse* proper to the intermediate stages is called a "methodological notion".

A second basic structure involves the resolution of act. Fabro specifies this as a resolution from accidental forms to substantial form and from both of these to act of being. Fabro explicitly refers to this resolution in *PC*[8], his 1972 debate on the problem of foundation[9], his 1974 article on the notion of participation[10] and his 1983 theses[11].

A third basic structure regards the distinction Fabro makes between the formal resolution-reduction of participated perfection to "formal, intensive *esse*" and the real resolution-reduction of participated act to *Ipsum Esse Per Se Subsistens*. Fabro refers to this distinction in *NMP*[12], *PC*[13] and "La problematica dello *esse* tomistico":

> The Thomistic commentary on Dionysius indicates two moments of this supreme exaltation of *esse*: *a*) the 'formal reduction' by means of the notion of participation, of all perfections to *esse*, insofar as these are called "participants" in the supreme perfection that is *esse* […]; *b*) the "real reduction", by means of the Aristotelian couplet of act and potency, of all the perfections to "potency" with respect to *esse* which is the act par excellence[14].

Alain Contat has indicated that these two resolutions-reductions pertain to the passage from the methodological notion of *ens-esse* to the intensive notion of *esse*. He writes: "The last passage has, so to speak, two sides, one 'formal' and another 'real'. The formal reduction or resolution ascends

[7] See C. FABRO, "Existence", 723.
[8] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 66.
[9] See C. FABRO, in "Dibattito congressuale", 403.
[10] See C. FABRO, "The Intensive Hermeneutics…", 486.
[11] See C. FABRO, *IST*, 178, thesis XLV.
[12] See C. FABRO, *NMP*, 197.
[13] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 221-222.
[14] C. FABRO, "La problematica dello *esse* tomistico", *TPM*, 109.

along the line of the participated participation, while the real reduction or resolution ascends along the way of actuating causality"[15].

A fourth, basic structure concerns the stages proper to the "real reduction" of participated *esse* to *Esse per essentiam*: *esse* as *actus essendi*, Fabro writes, "has also been discovered by the method of the absolute reduction of the act of being by participation to the *esse per essentiam*"[16]. Some of Fabro's works outline this real reduction according to three moments or principles:

[1] The first principle is that of the "emergence of the act" which, based on the results of the previous stages of metaphysical reflection, establishes that *esse* is the perfection of all perfections (result of dialectical ascension and formal resolution-reduction) and the act of all acts (result of the resolution of act).
[2] The second principle is that of "separated perfection", which establishes that *Ipsum Esse Subsistens* can only be one and is consequently the transcendental, extrinsic cause of all other beings.
[3] The third principle is that of "participation", which has both a causal-dynamic and constitutive-structural expression: all other beings depend on *Ipsum Esse Subsistens* and are *entia per participationem* in that they are really composed of a *essentia* and *actus essendi*.

The nature and dynamic of the reduction to *Esse per essentiam* is a constant theme in Fabro's works and is present in his early 1936 article on the principle of causality[17], *Metaphysica*[18], his two articles on the Fourth Way[19], *L'uomo e il rischio di Dio* (1967)[20], his 1967 article on Thomistic *esse*[21] and his 1974 article on participation[22].

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[15] A. CONTAT, "Le figure della differenza ontologica…", 120-121. See also: L. ROMERA, *Pensar el ser*, 261.

[16] C. FABRO, "The Intensive Hermeneutics…", 486.

[17] See C. FABRO, "La difesa critica del principio di causa, *ET*, 39-45.

[18] See C. FABRO, *Metaphysica*, 226-231.

[19] See C. FABRO, "Sviluppo, significato e valore della IV via", *ET*, 351-385; *Ibid*., "Il fondamento metafisico della IV via", *ET*, 387-406.

[20] See C. FABRO, *L'uomo e il rischio di Dio*, 369-372.

[21] See C. FABRO, "L'*esse* tomistico e la ripresa della metafisica", *Angelicum* 3 (1967), 306: "With the ultimate reduction or 'step backward' to '*Esse ipsum*' as act of all acts, thought has made the return to the foundation asked for by Heidegger, as to its primary foundation. The process of this foundation is not by

In the latter stages of Fabro's metaphysical reflection, the concentric nature becomes more prominent. Fabro often argues that there is a *speculative* confluence of the demonstrations of God's existence based on participation, the demonstration of creation *ex nihilo* and the argument for the real distinction according to the notion of participation. From his work on transcendental causality in *PC* we can glean three structural indications: first, Fabro deals with the relationship between creatures and their Creator according to three successive "moments" which are identical in God: creation, conservation and divine motion; second, the determination of dynamic, transcendental causality precedes the *ultimate* – not the initial – clarification of the nature of the formal causality of *esse* (predicamental causality), namely how the created form receives, limits and gives created *esse*; third, Fabro places the analogy of being as the conclusive moment of metaphysics insofar as it is the semantic expression of participation[23].

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demonstration in the proper sense, but by reduction or by the passage of act to act: moving from the accidental actuations to the substantial formal act and ultimately to *actus essendi* as the act of all acts. Here the spirit then moves to the second foundation which is that from the participated *actus essendi* to *Esse per essentiam* and this ultimate foundation comes about by demonstration: however it is a demonstration that has a synthetic character since it corresponds, by elevation, to the plexus of the notion of *ens* on which it is founded and cannot be analytic".

[22] See C. FABRO, "The intensive hermeneutics…", 487: "A creature has therefore its own participated *actus essendi* which enters into real composition with essence as its transcendental potency. God, on the other hand, is the *esse per essentiam* or separated *esse* which is both transcendent and grounding. The Platonic principle of the idea or separated perfection holds true only with regard to the *esse* as the act of all acts and of all forms, which was unknown to Plato as well as to Aristotle. This principle of separated perfection is eminently of Platonic origin and must be integrated with the Aristotelian principle of the emergence of act. Both principles are indeed founded on the synthetic Thomistic principle of participation. But despite his general acceptance of the Platonic principle of separated perfection, Thomas follows Aristotle in rejecting its application to the forms as such and, going beyond Aristotle who does not know *esse* as act, applies it exclusively to *esse*. Thus *Esse ipsum* or *Esse subsistens* is God himself who is the first, immovable, and separated Principle situated, as it were, at the summit of eternity (*in arce aeternitatis*). Hence God, as pure *esse*, is the grounding Act that is ever present in all acts, the present that actuates every presence".

[23] An open problem in structuring Fabro's metaphysical reflection is that of the placement of reflection on the transcendental properties of *ens*. In Fabro's *Metaphysica*, the transcendentals are dealt with at the end along with the analogical notion of being. Hence, I will deal with the transcendentals at the end. I would

With these indications in mind, we can establish the general outline of Fabro's metaphysical reflection as follows.

THE STRUCTURE OF METAPHYSICAL REFLECTION
ACCORDING TO CORNELIO FABRO

[1] The initial notion of *ens*
  [1.1] *Ens* as *primum cognitum*
  [1.2] Phenomenological reflection on being
[2] Passage from the initial notion to the methodological notion of being
  [2.1] Problem of movement and multiplicity
  [2.2] Constitution of the *genus subiectum* of metaphysics
[3] Methodological notion of being
  [3.1] Real distinction between essence and *esse*
  [3.2] Formal predicamental causality
[4] Passage from the methodological notion to the intensive notion of being
  [4.1] Formal reduction of perfections to the formal plexus of *esse ipsum*
  [4.2] Real reduction of *esse participatum* to *Esse per Essentiam*
    [4.2.1] Principle of the emergence of act
    [4.2.2] Principle of separated perfection
    [4.2.3] Principle of participation
      [4.2.3.1] Causal participation and creation
      [4.2.3.2] Participative structure of created *ens*
[5] Intensive notion of being
  [5.1] Intensive *esse*
  [5.2] Transcendental properties of *ens*
  [5.3] Analogy as the semantics of participation

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suggest, however, that the transcendentals should be dealt with in three ways: 1) "noetically" with *ens* as *primum cognitum* insofar as the transcendentals are the first notions of the intellect; 2) "ontologically" after the initial demonstration of the distinction between essence and *esse* in finite beings insofar as the degree of transcendental goodness or truth of a being depends on its degree of *esse*; and 3) "theologically" in the doctrine of creation insofar as the transcendentals are divine names and are created by God, who is *Summum Bonum* and *Prima veritas*. The theological foundation of the transcendentals establishes the lines of extrinsic causality between Creator and the creature against the backdrop of the metaphysical notion of participation and analogical predication.

1. The initial notion of *ens*

This section considers the foundational role of *ens* as *primum cognitum* (1.1) as well as the content proper to phenomenological reflection on *ens-esse* (1.2).

1.1 *Ens* as *primum cognitum*

In this section, I first retrace the evolution of Fabro's thought on *ens* as *primum cognitum* and then take up the recent assessments of his theory made by Jan A. Aertsen and Luis Romera.

Our overview of the evolution of Fabro's thought revealed that Fabro gradually modifies his position on *ens* as *primum cognitum* and, in the end, prefers to speak about an apprehension of *ens* instead of a formal abstraction of *ens*. The most important stages in this evolution are as follows[24].

In *NMP*, Fabro holds that the *primum cognitum* is obtained by means of formal abstraction[25] or a "quasi-formal abstraction"[26]. While it is true that

[24] Several doctoral dissertations have already dealt with the theme of *ens* as *primum cognitum* in the work of Cornelio Fabro. See L. ROMERA, *Pensar el ser*, 131-222. Romera's Chapter Five is dedicated to Fabro's thought on the nature and content of *ens* as *primum cognitum*; Chapter Six is dedicated to the evolution of Fabro's thought on how we grasp *ens* (*NMP* and formal abstraction, *PP* and the perception of *ens*, Fabro's mature thought on *apprehensio entis*); Chapter Seven is dedicated to the *primum cognitum* and the development of the intellect (principle of non-contradiction, first principles, *ens* as intellectual *habitus*); Romera's conclusions also deal with Fabro's thought on *ens* as *primum cognitum* (p. 330-333). See also A. LOZANO, *La primera captación intelectual como fundamento del proceso de abstracción del universal según Santo Tomás de Aquino: una interpretación desde Cornelio Fabro, Étienne Gilson, Jacques Maritain y Léon Nöel*, Pontificia Universitas Lateranensis, Rome 2006, 71-106; J. P. OLIVERA, *El punto de partida de la metafísica de Santo Tomás de Aquino, según Cornelio Fabro*, Pontificia Universitas Lateranensis, Rome 2007. C. FERRARO also speaks about the evolution in Fabro's thought on the problem in his article, "La conoscenza dell'*ens* e dell'*esse* dalla prospettiva del tomismo essenziale", *Doctor Angelicus* 5 (2005), 75-108.

[25] See C. FABRO, *NMP*, 136: "From the psychological point of view, we know that the first notion that the intellect forms is that of *ens*, and it is a notion evidently obtained by formal abstraction; but this is the most imperfect and confused notion and indicates the beginning and awakening of the intellectual life".

this initial view of Fabro is corrected in his more mature works, *NMP* already contains references to the importance of the role of perception in the *primum cognitum.* Romera writes:

> The danger of a formalistic conception of *ens*, which the preceding affirmations could suggest, is moved away from, when, further on he indicates that this *ens* directly refers to the concrete and to its actual nature. In any case, one comes to *ens* by means of a quasi-formal abstraction of perception of a concrete order. The knowledge of the *primum cognitum* consists in an operation by which, in direct relation to sensible knowledge of that which is present, one grasps both the essence and the existence of the subject that is known. In this early work, Fabro maintains the idea that an abstraction corresponds to the first notion (precisely because it is an intellectual notion), yet already manifests the relationship that it has with perception: because to know *ens*, is to know the *ratio entis* of the real, which every man has, and with which we enter into contact at the noetic level thanks to sensible knowledge. This last aspect, its relation to perception, is developed in other words, yet even in the first, he highlights that being as existence is touched in sensibility, due to the 'present" characteristic that the known sensibly has, and due to the fact that such existence is grasped by understanding within or together with essence[27].

In *Percezione e Pensiero*, Fabro considers the initial notion of *ens* in relation to the perception of the concrete. Through this perception we grasp the existent characteristic of the concrete thanks to the continuity between sensible and intellectual knowledge[28].

In *Partecipazione e causalità*, Fabro calls *ens* the *primum psychologicum* (referring to the temporal priority of *ens*) as well as the *primum criticum-ontologicum* (referring to its constitutive priority): the confused notion of *ens* is the first notion, the proper object of the intellect, the ultimate point of reference for all concepts and the first and last (*prima conceptio et ultima resolutio*) in the conceptual reduction of the real[29].

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[26] See C. FABRO, *NMP*, 187: "A *first notion of being*, that which signals the first awakening of our intellectual faculty—it is fruit of an abstraction, quasi-formal, from a particular perception of the concrete order".

[27] See L. ROMERA, *Pensar el ser*, 172-173.

[28] See L. ROMERA, *Pensar el ser*, 173-178;

[29] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 173: "The property of *ens* is that of being the first and the last in the process of the *conceptual* reduction of the real, since the *ratio entis* is the first 'formality' that founds the intelligibility of all other realities and thus has the value of an absolute principle: 'Sicut in demonstrabilibus oportet fieri *reductionem* in aliqua principiaper se intellectui nota, ita invesigando quid est

Throughout the 1960s, Fabro's works argue for the following. First, the *apprehensio entis* has both a *temporal* priority and a *constitutive* priority over all other notions of the intellect[30]. There is a mutual self-giving between consciousness and *ens*, which entails an intrinsic and constitutive correspondence: "the being-in-act of consciousness as presence in act is founded on *ens* […] and is present in virtue of the presentation (in act) of the real"[31].

Second, in the first notion of *ens* is a synthetic notion, for there is a content (*quod, Was*) and an act or existential fact (*Dass*). *Ens* appears as a synthesis-in-act and as a result – and not as the ultimate foundation[32]. In the Thomistic synthesis of *essentia* and *esse* in *ens*, there is a nexus (synthesis) of act and act and not of matter and form (Kant).

Third, *ens* is of a foundational nature since it is the transcendental of the transcendentals or the *transcendentale fundans* and the foundation of the first principles of the intellect[33]. For St. Thomas the first speculative and practical principles are the ultimate foundation of (reflexive) knowledge but these are not, however, the first (and ultimate) foundation of knowledge. "The radical foundation or the *transcendental primum*, on which the first principles have to be founded, is the immediate apprehension of *ens*, which is absolutely first under all aspects and absolutely founding for all levels of knowledge"[34]. Fabro contrasts the Scholastic and Thomistic approach to knowledge of reality. Scholasticism, which conceives valid knowledge in terms of the pure abstraction of the universal and the foundation of such abstraction of the essence, places the primordial evidence of the first principles of identity and non-contradiction. In Thomism, one does not stop the *reductio* or *resolutio in fundamentum* at the abstract, first principles, but proceeds further and founds such principles on *ens*[35]. For St. Thomas, the apprehension of *ens* is presented as the *primum fundamentum fundans* for

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unumquodque, alias utrobique in infinitum iretur et sic periret omnino scientia et cognitio rerum'".

[30] See C. FABRO, "Per la determinazione dell'essere tomistico", *TPM*, 264.

[31] C. FABRO, "The Transcendentality of *Ens-Esse*…", 417.

[32] See C. FABRO, "Notes pour la fondation métaphysique de l'être", *TPM*, 291.

[33] See C. FABRO, "L'*esse tomistico e la ripresa della metafisica*", 295-302.

[34] C. FABRO, *L'uomo e il rischio di Dio*, 367.

[35] I-II, q. 94, a. 2: "Est ens, [id] cuius intellectus includitur in omnibus quaecumque quis apprehendit. Et ideo primum principium indemonstrabile est quod non est simul affirmare et negare, quod fundatur supra rationem entis et non entis, et super hoc principio omnia alia fundantur".

knowledge. *Ens* is not merely a *primum* in the psychological order, but also a *primum* in the order of absolute foundation: "*Primo in conceptione cadit ens, quia secundum hoc unumquodque cognoscibile est in quantum est actu*"[36].

Fourth, there is a reference to the Absolute in the *primum cognitum*. The Thomistic apprehension of *ens*, Fabro argues, includes a dialectical relation between *essentia* and *esse*, and a reference to the Absolute (*esse participatum* to *Esse per essentiam*). *Esse*, he writes, transcendentally emerges over all other acts insofar as it is their foundation and actuates all other acts. God as *Esse ipsum* is the *real* foundation of the first act of every *ens*. The apprehension of *ens* is the primary noetical foundation of all knowledge and, therefore, of our knowledge of God. Unlike our immediate knowledge of the existence of material things, our knowledge of God is mediated: "God is *Esse ipsum*, he cannot be said *ens* in the proper sense: since God is pure Act, therefore, absolutely unlimited and for us indeterminate, while *ens* is always something determinate"[37].

Fifth, if abstraction presupposes the *notio entis* and is founded on the knowledge of the first principles, "then the original apprehension of the *notio entis*, which precedes everything and is presupposed in everything, cannot be merely the effect of abstraction in the ordinary sense"[38]. Because the notion of *ens* includes both essence (content) and *esse* (*actus essendi*), "the origin of the *notio entis* can in no wise be referred to the process which abstracts only essence"[39].

In the 1970s, Fabro pointed out that we have a direct immediate experience (apprehension) of *ens* and that reflection on *ens* permits a certain *content* of being and *act* of being to emerge. Fabro also refers to the resolution of act – a movement from accidental acts to substantial acts to *esse* – as the means by which we come to know *esse ut actus*: "I did not say that *ens* is gotten from immediate perception, but from immediate apprehension. From *ens*, thus understood, one comes to *esse* […] by means of a resolutive and not abstractive process. Therefore, by a resolutive process, of a resolution to the principle, of act to act: from accidental acts to substantial act, from substantial act to entitative act"[40].

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[36] I, q. 5, a. 2.
[37] C. FABRO, *L'uomo e il rischio di Dio*, 368.
[38] C. FABRO, "The Transcendentality of *Ens-Esse*…", 424.
[39] C. FABRO, "The Transcendentality of *Ens-Esse*…", 424.
[40] C. FABRO, in "Dibattito congressuale", 403.

Fabro's 1983 article on "*Problematica del tomismo di scuola*" is particularly enlightening as to Fabro's mature position on our apprehension of *ens*. The article is largely a critique of Maritain's position on the abstraction of *ens* in the line of essence[41]. The main points of the article are that, first, "*ens* constitutes the absolutely first object of our knowing: St. Thomas does not speak of *intuitio* and much less of *abstractio*, but simply of *apprehensio* which is the most obvious and immediate operation and, thus, the most important"[42]. Secondly, *esse* is grasped in *ens*, which embraces both act and content: "*Ens* expresses the primary and total concreteness since it embraces both act (*esse*) and content (*essentia*) in a more or less vague way or precisely according to the psychic development of the subject"[43].

Also notable are Fabro's 1983 theses and the fact that a large number (theses VI-XVIII) are dedicated to themes related to *ens* as *primum cognitum*[44]. In the theses, Fabro establishes that *ens* is the initial, primary noetical plexus; the initial, primary foundational plexus; and the veritative plexus.

Fabro emphasizes Thomistic *ens* in contrast to Hegelian *Sein* as beginning in the conclusion to his Posthumous work, *La prima riforma della dialettica hegeliana* (1988-2004)[45]. Fabro also identifies three different positions on the nature of the *primum cogitum*:

[1] Concrete-formal: Scholastic formalism designates the *subiectum* of metaphysics as that which has a quiddity that exists or can exist outside the mind. Consequently *ens* is a concrete-formal: concrete in reference to the sensible composite and formal due to the intelligible universal (the possible quiddity)[46].

[2] Transcendental-abstract: the point of departure of metaphysics for Transcendental Thomism is found in the universal that embraces the totality of the individual possible existents. Being is postulated as an anticipatory horizon on which something can appear. Being

[41] See C. FABRO, "Problematica del tomismo di scuola", 187-199.
[42] C. FABRO, "Problematica del tomismo di scuola", 198.
[43] C. FABRO, "Problematica del tomismo di scuola", 198.
[44] See C. FABRO, *IST*, 159-165.
[45] See C. FABRO, *La prima riforma della dialettica hegeliana*, 224-242.
[46] See A. CONTAT, "L'étant, l'*esse* et la participation selon Cornelio Fabro", 370.

is transcendental in the sense of a condition of possibility and is abstract due to its indeterminateness[47].

[3] Concrete-transcendental: against these two positions, Fabro holds that *esse* surpasses and founds the categorical content and intelligibility of *ens*. *Ens* is concrete insofar as our experience reveals that it is a composite of perfections that depend on the emergent act of being; it is transcendental in the classical sense of the term since *ens* contains all that the thing is and all that the intellect can know[48].

To conclude these paragraphs on the development of Fabro position on *ens* as *primum cognitum*, I begin with Romera's summary of the evolution:

> In the first works there is an oscillation between considering the *primum cognitum* as a notion of formal content, or as a concept that, strictly speaking, does not refer to a form. In the works of maturity he insists on the last point, maintaining that *ens* is not strictly a normal, abstract concept. To the degree in which Fabro relates it more strictly with the knowledge of the concrete-real, and in particular to his knowledge as real (which it is), he leaves aside a formalistic conception of the *primum cognitum*[49].

As regards the "content" of the first notion, Fabro holds in *NMP* that the initial notion of *ens* as *id quod habet esse* is a notion of minimum formal content and maximum extension[50]. This does not mean that *ens* is a supreme, indeterminate and empty genus. In *La prima riforma della dialettica hegeliana*, Fabro ponders the paradox of *ens* as *magis universale et intensivum*: "Certainly the plexus *ens* under the semantic aspect can be called the *magis universale* or *extensivum* but it is also, paradoxically, the *magis intensivum* or *comprehensivum*: here, in *ens*, *comprehendere* has a dynamic sense and not a static one, like it does for the essence"[51].

Turning now to the assessment of Fabro's theory, there seems to be some confusion regarding Fabro's theory about *ens* as *primum cognitum* and

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[47] See A. CONTAT, "L'étant, l'*esse* et la participation selon Cornelio Fabro", 371.

[48] See A. CONTAT, "L'étant, l'*esse* et la participation selon Cornelio Fabro", 371.

[49] L. ROMERA, *Pensar el ser*, 144-145.

[50] See C. FABRO, *NMP*, 193.

[51] C. FABRO, *La prima riforma della dialettica hegeliana*, 232-240.

our grasping of *esse* within that initial *cognitum*. In his *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals* (1996), Jan Aertsen considers three positions on our initial knowledge of *ens* as *primum cognitum*. Fabro is included in the second position, along with Gilson. According to Aertsen, this position holds that the conception of *ens* cannot be the result of abstraction[52]. He writes: "In both [Fabro and Gilson] the fact that Thomas's notion of being (*ens*) possesses a certain duality plays an important role: it signifies 'that which has being' (*id quod habet esse*) or 'what is' (*quod est*)". Aertsen's placement of Gilson and Fabro together is perplexing, since the two proposals of Gilson and Fabro are strikingly different[53]. Regarding Fabro, Aertsen summarizes: "If the notion of being, Fabro argues, includes in itself two elements, namely, essence or content and the act of being, this notion cannot be the effect of 'ordinary' abstraction, which abstracts only essence. The origin of the notion of being requires a form of 'conjoint abstraction' of content on the part of the mind and of act on the part of experience"[54]. Further on, Aertsen holds that neither Fabro's position nor that of the others in question is correct. Aertsen's judgment of Fabro, however, could stem from an incomplete reading of Fabro's work on the problem. Fabro's solution, in my opinion, actually seems to be in agreement with Aertsen's proposal: *ens* is initially "apprehended" and not "abstracted".

Aertsen points out that St. Thomas "clearly affirms that the concept of being belongs to simple apprehension" and that this stands in contrast to "the contention of 'Existential Thomism' that the concept of being is a judgment or proposition"[55]. Three points should be mentioned in this regard:

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[52] See J. AERTSEN, *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals*, E.J. Brill, Leiden 1996, 175: "We find this view in two most distinguished scholars of Thomism in our century, Cornelio Fabro and Etienne Gilson".

[53] See L. ROMERA, *Pensar el ser*, 113-118; 126-130. "Es tan neta la separación entre el conocimiento del *esse* y la primera operación, que el filósofo francés [Gilson] considera que ya en el *primum cognitum* se ejerce un juicio, por medio del cual se capta el *esse* del *ens*" (116). "La crítica de Cornelio Fabro a dichas posturas se desarrolla en dos momentos: en el primero, se clarifica el ser que se da en la estructura predicativa; en el segundo momento vuelve sobre el texto de Santo Tomás [*In Boethii De Trinitate*, q. 5, a. 3] para especificar el significado que tiene el término *esse* allí" (p. 127); B. MONDIN, "La conoscenza dell'essere in Fabro e Gilson", *Euntes Docete*, 50 (1997), 85-115; A. ROBIGLIO, "Gilson e Fabro. Appunti per un confronto", *Divus Thomas* (B) 17 (1997), 59-76.

[54] J. AERTSEN, *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals*, 175. Aertsen refers to Fabro's article, "The Transcendentality of *Ens-Esse*…" (1966).

[55] J. AERTSEN, *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals*, 179.

first, the article which Aertsen refers to is only one of Fabro's many texts on the problem of how *ens* as *primum cognitum* is grasped; second, while Fabro says that *ens* as *primum cognitum* is not obtained by abstraction, he does not affirm that it is obtained by judgment; third, Fabro affirms that *ens* is not abstracted by the intellect, yet he also affirms, as does Aertsen, that *ens* is *apprehended* by the intellect.

To my knowledge, the most extensive research into Fabro's position on the apprehension of *ens* as *primum cognitum* is found in L. Romera's *Pensar el ser* (1994). Romera's summary of Fabro's theory and Romera's conclusions can be gathered under four headings: 1) the apprehension of *ens*; 2) the role of perception in the formation of the *primum cognitum*; 3) the relationship *esse-ens* in the *primum cognitum*; 4) Romera's assessment of Fabro's position.

1) *The apprehension of ens*. For Fabro, the first notion of the intellect, *ens*, is obtained, not by means of an "abstraction", but rather by means of an "apprehension". Judgment is not involved in the process of the apprehension of the first notion. If necessary, one can speak of a "conjoint apprehension" which refers to the "apprehension" of essence (content) and an "experience" of *esse* (act). In the words of Romera:

> The *primum cognitum* is a plexus of content (essence) and act, which one can express with the formula *id quod habet esse*. It is not the mere apprehension of a form or of the most general formality, or directly knowing *actus essendi* as such. It is rather a plexus that includes a duality. From this we gather that the understanding is not initially of forms (*simplex apprehensio*), while in a second moment it will affirm existence (in judgment). On the contrary, it grasps in its origin the plexus of formal content (minimal) and of act, of actuation, of insertion in reality. As a participle, our author sustains that *ens* says act, the being in act of *esse*. This means that already in the first knowledge we have know – although in a confused way – the act of being; not insofar as it is properly act (as resolutive metaphysical notion of the real), but yes insofar as to the actual character of the real insofar as it is real. The understanding is not, we insist, initially formal, in order to later come to the real as such in a second moment; the intellect comes to the notion of the real from the beginning[56].

Ens is the initial and founding, primary noetic plexus and the foundation of all knowledge, science and judgments[57]. *Ens* is the first object of our intellectual knowledge:

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[56] L. ROMERA, *Pensar el ser*, 331-332.
[57] See C. FABRO, *IST*, 161-162.

> For Fabro, following the doctrine of St. Thomas, *ens* constitutes the absolutely first object of our knowledge[58]. The character of first is specified as a *primum*, not only psychological, but also critical-ontological[59]. Thus, we are dealing with a first not only in the analytical order, in the sense that analyzing any object one ultimately finds the notion of *ens*; but also of a first, both on the psychological plane – since it is the first that comes to our intellect, it is the unveiling and awakening of our mind[60] – and on the critical-ontological plane, since it is the fundament to which the critical problem remits and the basis of openness of the mind to reality, on which the metaphysical problem is sustained and has meaning[61].

Fabro explains in *Problematica del tomismo di scuola* (1983), that the first object of intellectual knowledge refers to knowing things that are in act. To this corresponds, not a simple abstraction according to the essence, but rather a synthetic apprehension according to the act of being. This is an apprehension since it is something immediate and of an intellectual nature; it is synthetic since it embraces both act and content. It is something vague in the beginning, yet becomes clearer according to the psychic development of the subject[62].

2) *The role of perception in the formation of the primum cognitum*: Fabro's mature works emphasize two aspects of our knowledge of the *primum cognitum*: he denies that this knowledge is of the order of abstract essences; he accentuates the relationship that this knowledge has with the concrete singular and its grasping of the concrete singular as an existent in act[63]: "Because it is the first knowledge and by making reference to the real as real and to the act that this has, the *primum* cognitum maintains a direct relationship with the grasping of the concrete. The *primum cognitum* is not an 'abstract notion' situated next to other abstract essences. Nor does it correspond to judgment. The grasping of *ens* is neither an abstraction, nor an intuition; it is rather a simple and synthetic apprehension (of content and act) which is had thanks to the primary and constitutive convergence of the sensible and the intelligible. It is an intellectual apprehension, prepared for

[58] See C. FABRO, "Problematica del tomismo di scuola", 198.
[59] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 173.
[60] See C. FABRO, *NMP*, 187.
[61] L. ROMERA, *Pensar el ser*, 135.
[62] See L. ROMERA, *Pensar el ser*, 178.
[63] See L. ROMERA, *Pensar el ser*, 186.

by the *experimentum*, made by the intellect in the act of perceiving the singular"[64].

In Chapter Six of his book, Romera takes into consideration the role of perception: The apprehension of *ens* consists in grasping *ens-esse* thanks to the convergence had between the sensitive and the intellectual spheres due to man's substantial unity[65]. The relationship between the perceptive act and the immediate, synthetic apprehension is dealt with in *Percezione e pensiero*, which indicates that the primary knowledge of *ens* is prepared by the senses by means of *experimentum*, the operation of experience by means of which the intellect stays in direct contact with reality[66]. In the perceptive act, the existence of what we perceive is immediately given. It is not obtained by way of argumentation, but rather due to the presence of what is known. According to Fabro, there is not a *sic et simpliciter* intuition of the existence of the existent, but rather an immediate, perceptive persuasion of the existence of the existent[67].

In the *primum cognitum* we grasp both *something* and *existing* immediately, although in a confused way. The interplay between the senses, *experimentum*, common sense, the *cogitativa*, means that this grasping and knowledge of essence and existence is founded in sensible knowledge[68]. An important role is given to the *conversio ad phantasmata* due to its "functional continuity" between the senses and understanding, in that it is by means of the *conversio* that our understanding has knowledge of the singular, and thus of the *ratio entis*[69]. "In *Partecipazione e causalità*, Fabro specifies that the *primum cognitum* refers to an immediate experience of the being of *ens* in act and not of *esse* as act. Here, our author, following his distinction between *esse in actu* and *esse ut actus*, makes it clear that such

[64] L. ROMERA, *Pensar el ser*, 332.

[65] See L. ROMERA, *Pensar el ser*, 179.

[66] See L. ROMERA, *Pensar el ser*, 179.

[67] See L. ROMERA, *Pensar el ser*, 180.

[68] See L. ROMERA, *Pensar el ser*, 182: "Resumiendo, en el *primum cognitum* captamos el *algo* y el *existir*, ambos inmediatamente, aunque de forma confusa. Tal captación ambivalente se hace por el mismo material que presenta la sensibilidad, el *experimentum* que preparan el sentido común y la cogitativa, dándose aquí esa continuidad entre las dos esferas de nuestro conocimiento. De tal forma el conocimiento sensible es el fundamento para el conocimiento de la esencia y de la existencia, aunque no lo sea del mismo modo".

[69] See L. ROMERA, *Pensar el ser*, 182-183. Romera is summarizing Fabro's exposition found in *PP*, 380-382.

experience is only of *esse in actu* and not of *esse ut actus*"[70]. *Esse*, as act, is grasped in *ens*[71].

3) *Esse* and *ens*: With regard to the grasping of *esse* within this *primum cognitum*, Romera notes that in contrast to other Thomists who focus knowledge of *esse* on a particular operation (third degree of abstraction, judgment, intuition, etc.), Fabro articulates the knowledge of *esse* in two moments: as grasped in the *primum cognitum* and as known in the metaphysical ascension proper to the method of *resolutio*[72].

4) *Assessment*: Romera's conclusions on Fabro's theory of *ens* as *primum cognitum* are the following. First, Fabro's awareness of the importance of the argument concerning the *primum cognitum* was most likely heightened in his dialogue with Hegel and Heidegger, since the way that *ens* is understood determines our understanding of the relationship between consciousness and being. Based on a correct understanding of *ens* as *primum cognitum*, the initial, empty Hegelian *Sein* and the justification of his dialectic are shown to be insufficient. As well, from this understanding, the perplexities and difficulties in Heideggerian question about *Sein-Seiende* can be avoided, and, in a certain sense, be made meaningful and properly focused[73].

Secondly, an analysis of Fabro's thought manifests an evolution in his conception of the *primum cognitum*. The initial framework, present in his first works, is open to the risks of formalism, especially since the terminology is not clear and some concepts are still in the process of being defined. In Fabro's mature works, Fabro stresses the "actual aspect" (not the formal aspect) of the *primum cognitum* and its reference to reality. Romera calls this evolution a "maturing", rather than a change in the essentials[74].

Thirdly, in Fabro's theory, there are some points which need to be improved upon. Romera stresses the principal one: the lack of precision and clarity when dealing with the gnoseological nature of the *primum cognitum*. Fabro's theory deals adequately with sensible knowledge, perception and *conversio ad phantasmata*, yet lacks a more detailed study on the nature and

[70] L. ROMERA, *Pensar el ser*, 183.

[71] See L. ROMERA, *Pensar el ser*, 184. Phenomenological reflection obtains an initial knowledge of existence by distinguishing between essential content and existence; knowledge of *esse* as first act is obtained by means of metaphysical reflection.

[72] See L. ROMERA, *Pensar el ser*, 329.

[73] See L. ROMERA, *Pensar el ser*, 330.

[74] See L. ROMERA, *Pensar el ser*, 331.

distinction of the intellectual operations and the function of the agent intellect: "Concretely, it is not clear whether the *apprehensio entis* is a particular type of abstraction and whether such apprehension is had always and only in the *conversio ad phantasmata*, which is the proper function of the intellect in perception"[75]. Romera holds that this precision and clarity can be found in identifying the *primum cognitum* as an intellectual *habitus*, present in every intellectual act of knowledge. Based on Fabro's theory, he concludes that: 1) the *primum cognitum* is the proper object of the intellect, and present in every intellectual act; 2) *ens* is grasped immediately (*statim*); and 3) this apprehension corresponds to *intellectus*[76].

Another point can be added to Romera's conclusions. It regards Fabro's use of the term "presence" when speaking about the presence of *ens* to consciousness and the actuation of consciousness by the *primum cognitum*. When Fabro uses the term "presence" or speaks about the relationship of *ens* and consciousness, some of his phrases are very difficult to understand or, at least, open to misinterpretation. For example, he writes that in the Thomistic apprehension of *ens*, there is a "simultaneous attestation of the being-in-act of the real, and of the being-in-act of consciousness, and of the being-in-act of the mutual relationship of the real to consciousness and of consciousness to the real"[77]. Benignly interpreted, Fabro is saying that, in the relationship of consciousness to *ens*, it is by means of the *esse* of *ens* that *ens* makes itself present to consciousness and it is consciousness that is actuated by the presence of *ens*. According to Thomistic thought, then, the philosopher recognizes the role of *ens* (with its transcendental tension of act and content) at the beginning of our thought, recognizes the constitutive interconnectedness of content (essence) to act (*esse*), and, due to this tension, grounds consciousness in being and not being in consciousness.

1.2 Phenomenological reflection on *ens-esse*

In *Metaphysica*, Fabro places an intermediate stage, a "common notion" of *ens*, between our initial notion of *ens* and the initial, *metaphysical* notion of *ens* (*ens commune*). Fabro describes this notion as pre-scientific and characterized by phenomenic differences. In this stage, the differences and distinctions between realities are attested to, but no principle for these

[75] L. ROMERA, *Pensar el ser*, 186.
[76] See L. ROMERA, *Pensar el ser*, 215.
[77] C. FABRO, "The Transcendentality of *ens-esse*…", 419.

distinctions is actively sought[78]. In *PC*, Fabro also spoke about "phenomenological *esse*" as an intermediate stage proper to our initial, pre-metaphysical reflection on being: "The beginning of this reflection on *esse* is the awareness of reality, of the effectuality of experience itself: […]. This is phenomenological *esse* as fact of existing: it is metaphysically neutral, since the problem of the structure of *ens* is not yet posed or resolved"[79].

Fabro holds that phenomenological *esse* (or "the fact of existing") points to a distinction between "real being" on the one hand and "essence as formal content" on the other. In this pre-philosophical, phenomenological phase, *esse* can be used to refer to or mean "reality in act", "substance in act", "form in act", or "existence". Fabro also draws attention to the difference between a phenomenological analysis and metaphysical reflection of reality: "Therefore, if the phenomenological analysis or reduction of experience brings us to distinguish between essence (content) and existence (fact), reality and its realization: metaphysical reflection or reduction discovers the distinction or 'Diremtion' between essence and *esse*, as potency and act"[80]. In *La prima riforma della dialettica hegeliana*, Fabro hints at a distinction between content and act that is proper to a secondary reflection and not to the initial apprehension of *ens*: "The first moment of the spirit in [its] contact with the real is synthetic, not analytic: it is the grasping of *ens*, as unitary apprehension of a [any] content in act. The explicit distinction, then, between content and act is the object of reflection and comes about in a second moment and only has meaning through the indissoluble reference to that originary synthesis"[81].

Fabro's main work on phenomenological reflection is found in *PP*. Our contact with reality occurs in the exercise of perception. Phenomenology clearly evidences that perception concerns "something that is", i.e., a content that is grasped in the exercise of the act of being[82]. The intrinsic duality of the notion of *ens*, then, is present in phenomenological analysis: such duality concerns the thing itself as *thing* (subject) and the *fact*

[78] See C. FABRO, *Metaphysica*, Introductio, 42.

[79] C. FABRO, *PC*, 234.

[80] C. FABRO, *PC*, 233.

[81] C. FABRO, *La prima riforma della dialettica hegeliana*, 231.

[82] C. FABRO, *PP*, 395: "Thus, in the object of perception we should distinguish the subject or essence and the act of being (*esse*): the perception of reality is the perception of an essence exercising its act of being. The foundation of the perception of reality consists in justifying the apprehension of *ens* as a synthesis of essence and *esse*".

of being of the thing (act). Given this duality of subject and act one can perceive "something-in-act", for no object is perceptible unless it is not perceived as something-in-act. Although content and act are united, this does not imply identity: one thing is knowing *what* an object is, another is knowing *that* it exists. Therefore, even phenomenologically, some sort of split between essence and existence is inevitable[83].

One perceives the existent when a certain phenomenological determination of essence and existence is realized. This determination is the primordial condition for a reflection that brings one to a rational system of reality[84]. Considered phenomenologically, then, *esse* is only a fact. Absolutely speaking, however, *esse* is something more profound and more intimate than the essence and the *value* of ontological entity depends more on the *esse* than on the essence. Thus, we see that phenomenology remains outside of metaphysics or in the atrium of metaphysics, yet cannot be totally excluded from it. Metaphysical classifications have a definite content to the degree that they are based on phenomenological classifications; hence, the value of metaphysics depends, for us, on the nature of the correspondence between phenomenological content and metaphysical content[85]. Ontological determinations arise from the analogous, phenomenological determinations and proceed step-by-step with them.

The very possibility of metaphysics is linked to the interchangeable subordination of experience and reflection; for metaphysical reflection builds on the data of experience. Perception and phenomenology deal with "that which is"; phenomenological reflection reveals a duality in *ens* of subject and the fact of being in act. The judgment of perception affirms the unification of essence and being, yet not their identity. The fact that essence and existence have irreducible notional contents brings one to the position of the duality. However, neither perception nor phenomenology considers the relationship between essence and *esse*, this consideration is reserved to metaphysics. Considered phenomenologically, *esse* is only a fact. Considered metaphysically, *esse* is revealed to be something more profound and intimate to the thing than its essence. Metaphysics progresses by means

[83] C. FABRO, *PP*, 396: "The fact that essence and existence have an irreducible notional content brings one to the position of the duality; the fact that they are one for the other impedes that the duality becomes dualism and isolationism, since it affirms the integration".

[84] See C. FABRO, *PP*, 397-399.

[85] See C. FABRO, *PP*, 400.

of analysis, while phenomenology advances towards a synthesis and becomes a support for metaphysical distinctions.

2. Passage to the methodological notion of being

In the passage from an initial notion of being to a methodological notion of being, proper to metaphysics, there are two important elements. The first concerns the problem of multiplicity, change and movement (2.1). The solution to this problem provides the philosopher with real distinctions in the structure of being (substance-accidents, potency-act, matter-form) and different types of causality. The second concerns the discovery or constitution of the *genus subiectum* of metaphysics (2.2): namely, how the philosopher passes from the problem of movement (*ens mobile*) to the problem of being as being (*ens qua ens*).

2.1 The problem of multiplicity, change and movement

In *Metaphysica*, Fabro clearly states that the first problem dealt with in and by philosophical reflection is that of multiplicity, change and movement. In fact, the cause of metaphysical wonder is that of the phenomena of change and multiplicity[86]. Change and multiplicity must be considered as expressions or manifestations of being, must be explained and must be given a solid foundation. Phenomenological reflection affirmed that: "within being, there are things that change and things that remain the same; some things determine the thing in an absolute way in knowledge, others in an accidental way; some things pertain to being as intrinsic constitutive [principles], others come and go as properties without *ens* itself changing"[87]. Based on this, being (*ens*) was first divided into predicaments according to the "reductive" method: "the mobile and the accidental reduce to something previous as the imperfect to the perfect. For an accident is imperfect: and movement is the act of the imperfect"[88].

Elements of this philosophical, yet pre-metaphysical stage are dealt with by Fabro in both *NMP* and in *Metaphysica*. In an attempt to structure this stage, however, we are confronted with two problems:

[86] See C. FABRO, *Metaphysica*, Liber primus, 58.

[87] C. FABRO, *Metaphysica*, Liber primus, 63.

[88] *De Potentia*, q. 8, a. 1 ad 9: "Mobile et accidens reducuntur ad aliquid prius sicut imperfectum ad perfectum. Nam accidens imperfectum est, et similiter motus est imperfecti actus".

First, while it is clear that this stage of reflection on the problem of becoming, movement and change concerns the distinctions made between substance and accidents and act and potency, it is not clear from Fabro's works how the distinction between matter and form precedes a properly metaphysical reflection on being. For example, in *Metaphysica*, Fabro argues that the object of metaphysics is able to be constituted by means of the notions of act and potency[89] and afterwards considers the problem of the individuation of being by means of matter and form. In *NMP*, Fabro deals with "matter marked by quantity" as the principle of individuation and does this within the problem of multiplicity, in a stage that precedes the passage from physical contrariety to metaphysical contrariety[90].

A second problem concerns how the reflection in *NMP* on predicamental participation and on the dialectical ascension from the individual to the perfections proper to the individual's species and genus may be incorporated into the structure of metaphysical reflection present in *Metaphysica* and later, more mature works. In the former we are dealing primarily with the basis for the formal resolution of perfection, while in the latter we are dealing with the resolution of act (accidents, substantial form, *actus essendi*).

In an attempt to resolve these two problems, I propose the following. The first moment of philosophical reflection, according to Fabro, belongs to the distinctions made between substance and accidents and between act and potency. Both couplets are introduced to resolve the problem of accidental change and accidental multiplicity. Once this problem is resolved, our thought can move in one of two directions, either towards the problem of real multiplicity within a species (a structural problem) or towards the problem of substantial change (problem of causality). In both, the problem of substantial form arises and further reflection on the relationship between form and being leads to metaphysics. Secondly, reflection on individuals that belong to a species and genus (as found, for example, in the section of *NMP* on predicamental participation) leads the philosopher to the real

[89] C. FABRO, *Metaphysica*, Liber primus, 118: "In this way, the division of being in act and potency investigates and penetrates with greater depth the anterior division of finite being, in substance and accident, and brings categorial being to the light of being as being. Substance which has accidents is composed of act and potency and is shown to be finite, dependent, participated and created. For this reason, by means of potency and act one realizes the transition to the constitution of metaphysics".

[90] See C. FABRO, *NMP*, 155-164.

distinction between matter and form. Consequently, a "proportional correspondence" between the "notional composition" of individual-species-genus and the "real composition" of matter and form is able to be established[91]. The belonging of an individual to a species or of a species to a genus is able to be considered "pre-metaphysically" and yet opens up to reflection on the *magis et minus* or degrees of perfection.

Thus, the passage towards a methodological notion of *ens-esse* may be structured as follows: 1) substance-accidents; 2) act-potency; 3) predicamental participation: individual-species and species-genus; 4) matter-form.

Substance and accidents. As we saw earlier, by means of phenomenological reduction, the substance is determined as: first, that which gives *unity* to being with respect to the multiplicity of accidents and phenomena; second, that which *remains* in a qualitative change of being; and, third, that which *subsists* and as foundation[92]. The first two properties pertain to substance as *essence* while the third reveals substance as *subject*. Here, Fabro emphasizes the initial role of phenomenology and how this must continue into a more profound metaphysical and dialectical reduction[93].

Act and potency. Phenomenological reflection demands that movement not be converted into something else in such a way that it ceases to be movement. Movement, according to the principle of non-contradiction cannot imply the simultaneous affirmation and negation of one and the same reality in such a way that movement ceases to be an "*ens*". Thus, "when movement is transferred from the phenomenological sphere to metaphysical reduction, it should simultaneously retain its originality and satisfy the first principle. From this dialectical tension between experience and movement and the demand of the first principle […], Aristotle elaborates his theory of act and potency"[94]. The notion of movement pertains to the phenomenological-ontological level and is grasped *per viam inventionis*: the notion of movement does not depend so much on the notions of act-potency and substance-accident as do the latter on the former[95]. In terms of reduction, passive potency reduces to active potency and active potency to

[91] See C. FABRO, *NMP*, 157.
[92] See C. FABRO, *Metaphysica*, Liber primus, 65.
[93] C. FABRO, *Metaphysica*, Liber primus, 65.
[94] C. FABRO, *Metaphysica*, Liber primus, 96.
[95] See C. FABRO, *Metaphysica*, Liber primus, 103.

act[96]. With regard to the reduction of active potency to act, Fabro concludes: "the metaphysical reduction of potencies concludes in act. This principle, which, on the one hand closes the phenomenological process of reduction, on the other hand, opens the analysis of *ens qua ens*, be this in the order of being or of action[97]. The analysis of movement, then, has effectively established the priority of act over potency: "Everything that passes from potency to act requires a preceding act in the agent, by which it is reduced to act"[98].

Predicamental participation. Fabro's exposition of predicamental participation in *NMP*[99] moves from the logical participations and problem of multiplicity to the real composition of matter and form; second, from the solution of matter as principle of individuation to the problem metaphysical contrariety (*magis et minus*); and, third, from the *magis et minus* of formal perfection to their foundation in *esse*. By means of metaphysical reflection, one seeks a real foundation for the logical-formal participations of individual-species and species-genus in the proportional correspondence that can be established between these participations and the real compositions of matter-form and subject-accidents. One establishes that there is multiplicity when there is an opposition of contrariety: contrariety is the opposition proper to those things which have the same subject in common; it is this opposition, which leads to the notion of real participation. While physical contrariety concerns movement and the opposition of the principles of movement; metaphysical contrariety concerns being and the opposition of *magis et minus* perfection in the order of being. A *magis et minus* can be seen in physical contrariety only when the terms of movement are considered *sub ratione entis*.

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[96] See *In IX Metaph*., lect. 1, n. 1777: "Haec autem potentia reducitur ad primam potentiam activam, quia passio ab agente causatur. Et propter hoc etiam potentia passiva reducitur ad activam".

[97] See C. FABRO, *Metaphysica*, Liber primus, 111.

[98] *In IX Metaph*., lect. 8, n. 1866: "Id enim, quod exit de potentia in actum, requirit actum praecedentem in agente, a quo reducitur in actum".

[99] See C. FABRO, *NMP*, 143: "By 'predicamental participation' I intend that in which both terms of the relation, participated and participant, remain in the field of finite *ens* and substance (predicaments). In the Commentary to *De Hebdomadibus*, two modes of this are recalled: one that is notional-formal and one that is real; and each of these modes has been presented under two forms: A = the species participated in the genus and the individual in the species; B = Matter participates in the Form and the subject (the substance) participates in the accident".

Essence: matter and form. In Chapter Three of this dissertation, I dealt at length with Fabro's thought on essence and the principle of individuation in material beings as found in his *Metaphysica* (Book Two, ch. 1-3). In synthesis, Fabro uses the distinctions between matter and form in order to solve to the problem of substantial change, the structure and unity of the "metaphysical essence" and the multiplicity of individuals in a species ("matter marked by quantity" as principle of individuation). A more profound and advanced consideration of essence is found in *Metaphysica,* Book Two, Chapter Four, which deals with themes such as the relationship between the essence and *suppositum* and between *esse* and *subsistentia*.

2.2 Constitution of the *genus subiectum* of metaphysics

The theme of how we discover *ens qua ens* or how the *genus subiectum* of metaphysics is constituted is dealt with three times by Fabro and in an indirect fashion. First, in *NMP*, Fabro characterized the passage to metaphysics as the passage from *physical* contrariety to *metaphysical* contrariety: "At the same time [movement] can be considered from a more vast and comprehensive point of view: namely, not only on the physical plane as a succession of contraries, but on the metaphysical plane of being, as a succession of *'more'* or *'less' perfect*, according to the ontological intensity of perfection"[100]. Physical contrariety concerns the *opposition* of two terms in relation to movement, while '*metaphysical*' contrariety concerns the *distinction* between the contraries according to a '*magis et minus*' in the order of being[101]. This "*magis et minus* appears solely when the terms of movement on the physical plane pass to the metaphysical plane and are considered '*sub ratione entis*', and it is in this way that one can speak of a '*magis et minus*' even in relation to (physical movement)"[102]. *Magis et minus* expresses different degrees of realization of the same form, which is communicated or participated to various subjects according to varying intensive degrees of perfection. Metaphysical contrariety is found in every creature and understood as a gradation of perfection in the formal order and in reference to the supreme *ratio* of being.

Second, in *Metaphysica*, Fabro refers to the problem of passing to the metaphysical notion of being in *Metaphysica*'s Introduction with regard to

[100] C. FABRO, *NMP*, 161.
[101] See C. FABRO, *NMP*, 161.
[102] C. FABRO, *NMP*, 162.

the problem of how we grasp the "initial metaphysical notion of *ens*" (*ens commune*):

> c) There is an *initial metaphysical notion of being* (*ens commune*), at the doorstep of metaphysics and makes it possible. We have spoken about it and we have to face it in what follows. What is proper to this notion is the explicit duality of the two elements: "that which is" and "being" and the problem of their relationship[103].
>
> d) In the metaphysical notion constituted by being, the problem of this relationship (essence and *esse*) is solved by means of the division of being in its modes or categories. To affirm the diversity of beings, one supposes a phenomenological-essential reduction[104].

The problem is addressed once again towards the conclusion to Book One of *Metaphysica*, in which Fabro proposes that the metaphysical reduction of potencies to act closes the phenomenological process of reduction and opens up to an analysis of *ens qua ens*[105]. This metaphysical reduction was described as follows:

> Passing from potency to act, potency is the capacity of act or the "not-being" such an act as act. Thus, there is an opposition of contradiction: to be capable of having or being able to receive and being or having something. If the opposition is in the real order, the distinction is real; if the opposition is in the logical order (genus and difference) the opposition is of reason, but with the indirect foundation of some distinction or real composition. In this way, the division of being in act and potency investigates and penetrates with greater depth the anterior division of finite being, in substance and accident, and brings categorial being to the light of being as being. Substance which has accidents is composed of act and potency and is shown to be finite, dependent, participated and created. For this reason, by means of potency and act one realizes the transition to the constitution of metaphysics[106].

Thus, according to Fabro, metaphysics is "constituted" by bringing categorial being under the light of *ens qua ens* by means of the real distinction between act and potency and the recognition of the dependent and participated nature of finite being.

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[103] C. FABRO, *Metaphysica*, Introductio, 43.
[104] C. FABRO, *Metaphysica*, Introductio, 44.
[105] See C. FABRO, *Metaphysica*, Liber primus, 111.
[106] C. FABRO, *Metaphysica*, Liber primus, 118.

In a third text, "La problematica dello *esse* tomistico" (1959), Fabro touches once again on the problem and specifies that metaphysical reflection, properly speaking, begins with an initial notion of *esse* which is seen as the act of *ens* in an indeterminate sense: "There is an 'initial notion' of *esse* (as of *ens*), which is the act of *ens* in the most indeterminate sense, that which St. Thomas sometimes indicates as '*esse commune*': *esse* can indicate any realty or actuality, the essence (*albedo*) and *actus essendi*, the belonging both to the real order and the logical order. It is called an initial notion since it is by recognizing it, by reflecting on it, metaphysical reflection is begun"[107].

In synthesis, what emerges from Fabro's texts on the constitution of the object of metaphysics is the following:

[1] In *NMP* and *Metaphysica*, Fabro refers to an initial stage of philosophical reflection that is not yet strictly "metaphysical". At this pre-metaphysical level, the problems of change and multiplicity are solved by means of the distinctions and connections made between substance and accidents, act and potency, individual and species, species and genus, and matter and form.

[2] For Fabro, the object of metaphysics (*ens in quantum est ens*) is constituted in the passage from the opposition of the terms of movement to the (metaphysical) distinction between different degrees of perfection. It is the reduction of potencies to act and superficial acts to more profound acts that leads to the constitution of metaphysics.

[3] Insofar as all of the terms, principles and distinctions (of the problem of movement) may be considered *sub ratione entis*, they can be said to form part of the beginning of metaphysical reflection. The object of metaphysics, *ens qua ens*, is "discovered" by through a continual analysis of the terms of movement.

[4] For Fabro, the passage to metaphysics is not effected by means of a negative judgment that some beings are immaterial or a demonstration of immaterial beings, but rather a consideration of the different degrees of perfection and their consideration *sub ratione entis*.

[5] In accord with Fabro's work on the principle of causality, there is an initial recognition of limitedness, dependence and, therefore,

[107] C. FABRO, "La problematica dello *esse* tomistico", *TPM*, 107.

participation[108]. For example, in *PC*, Fabro wrote that something can be called "*ens per participationem*" insofar as it presents itself as contingent and limited and this pertains to immediate and purely apprehensive thought[109].

3. The methodological notion of being

Fabro uses several different adjectives to characterize the notion of being proper to this stage: methodological, structural and proportional. This notion corresponds to the notion of being used throughout metaphysics, and precedes the intensive, terminal notion of being. In *NMP*, Fabro speaks of the methodological notion as the formal object of metaphysics[110]. Of this methodological notion of being, Fabro writes:

> Second in order follows the "methodological notion" of *esse* as "act" of *ens*, namely as the realizing principle of a formality or real perfection: in this notion the relationship between essence and *esse* is determined in view of the ultimate determination of the real be this of the finite in itself or of the finite with respect to the infinite. This is the crucial moment in which the various philosophies and metaphysics are differentiated: in this methodological notion, *esse* expresses the actuation or realization of the essence in any order. Every kind of metaphysics is characteristically structured according to the "ontological quality" which, in reality, is made to correspond to *esse* as act: the birth and divergence of the various metaphysics is found, therefore, in the passage from the initial notion (ontic or descriptive) of *esse* to the methodological one (ontological and constitutive)[111].

The notion is called "methodological" since it allows the metaphysician to arrange the different levels of consideration of *ens* (accidental, substantial, intensive, operative) in relation to being-in-act and its interpretation[112].

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[108] See C. FABRO, "La difesa critica …", *ET*, 40.

[109] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 238.

[110] See C. FABRO, *NMP*, 138: "While the confused being of ordinary reflection is the point of departure for thought, and the proportional notion of being is the formal object of metaphysics, which determines the position and the development of the problems, this ultimate notion of Being, signals like a *terminus* of metaphysical induction, which, at the same time, poses ulterior problems".

[111] C. FABRO, "La problematica dello *esse* tomistico", *TPM*, 108.

[112] See A. CONTAT, "Le figure della differenza ontologica…", 118.

3.1 The real distinction between essence and *esse*

In the text just quoted, Fabro refers to the relationship between essence and *esse*. Thus, to understand the "methodological notion" of being it is necessary to turn to Fabro's thought on the real distinction and, in particular, on the possibility of demonstrating the real distinction between essence and *esse* (in creatures) before demonstrating God's existence. The task is difficult for four reasons. First, Fabro's texts on the question are not very clear and it is difficult to determine whether or not the argument based on the notion of participation requires the demonstration of God's existence and the metaphysical determination of God's nature as *Ipsum Esse Per Se Subsistens*[113]. Second, as some scholars have pointed out, the evolution of Fabro's metaphysical thought comes to bear on his presentation of the argument of the real distinction. In his book, *L'essere come atto nel tomismo essenziale di Cornelio* Fabro, M. Pangallo points to three phases in this evolution[114]. David Twetten concurs with this division and expounds more fully on the details phases of this evolution with respect to the real

[113] See M. PANGALLO, "L'itinerario metafisico di Cornelio Fabro", 19: "In the Fabrian interpretation of causality as 'dynamic' participation creation is able to be understood and explained, philosophically, in light of the metaphysical notion of (transcendental) participation. But it is necessary to avoid that the argument falls into a vicious circle, namely, one needs to avoid that on the one hand participation leads to the truth of creation and, on the other, that, in its turn, one can speak of participation only after having admitted the doctrine of creation. *Fabro is not always very clear about this* [my italics]: nevertheless it appears evident that creation is an important achievement, even a philosophical one, of Christian thought and that the point of departure, in order to come to speak of creation, is the recognition of the existence of finite beings, that are not entirely being, but rather possesses – or *participate* in – the act of being (or *are* in the act of being". It is in this way that Fabro holds to be able to show the analytic nature of the principle of causality and thus that he intends to rise to the truth of creation, *by means of* (but not *starting from*) the notion of *contingentia*. Thus, the itinerary outlined by Fabro is following: finite beings *participate* being; among finite beings, some are *contingent* beings; that which is contingent *depends* in some way on another; this *other is cause*, which does not depend on another: namely, it is the *uncaused cause that causes* all being and all beings (the last point refers to the Second Way)".

[114] See M. PANGALLO, *L'essere come atto nel tomismo essenziale di Cornelio Fabro*, 148.

distinction[115]. Third, Fabro is often commenting on the evolution of Aquinas's thought. Thus, his own conclusions about the real distinction refer more to the evolution in St. Thomas's thought and to which arguments are given priority by Aquinas, rather than to whether or not other arguments are valid or possible. Lastly, Fabro's main focus is not the initial argument for the real distinction, but rather the ultimate determination of the participative structure of the creature (as *id quod finite participat esse*), which requires the demonstration of God's existence (*quia Deum esse*) and the affirmation of God as *Ipsum Esse Per Se Subsistens* in order to compare, by means of analogy, the creature's participated *esse* with the Creator's subsistent *esse*.

Summarizing the evolution of Fabro's thought on this point, we see that in his philosophy dissertation (1931), Fabro holds that the logical-metaphysical foundation of the principle of causality is discovered in the affirmation of the real distinction between "essence" and "existence" in finite beings. The title of the section is noteworthy: "The doctrine of act and potency requires the real composition in contingent and finite beings between essence and existence, such composition postulates the necessary objectivity of the principle of causality"[116]. Looking at the problem of movement and the Aristotelian notions of act and potency, Fabro concludes that there is a real distinction between act and potency and that act as perfection is limited by a corresponding potency which is the capacity for perfection[117]. Existence, he concludes, is act and perfection:

> This [*esse*] is the actuality of all things and their forms, it relates to these not as something *receiving*, but as *received* by all. Hence, the formal act "essence", and the entitative act "existence" relate to one another as potency and act. And, as we saw above, because act is not limited except by potency, then the entitative act in contingent beings, to be limited, should be limited by its potency, i.e., by the formal act, by essence; but as we saw, for this a real distinction is necessary, therefore essence and *esse* are really distinguished[118].

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[115] See D. TWETTEN, "Really Distinguishing Essence from *Esse*", *Proceedings of the Society for Medieval Logic and Metaphysics* 6 (2006), 81, n. 88.

[116] C. FABRO, *Principii causalitati necessitas...*, 2.

[117] C. FABRO, *Principii causalitati necessitas...*, 59-60.

[118] C. FABRO, *Principii causalitati necessitas...*, 64: "Ipsa est actualitas omnium rerum et ipsarum formarum, relate ad quae non se habet ut *recipiens* aliquid, sed potius ut *receptum* ab omnibus. Unde, actus formalis "essentia", et actus entitativus "existentia", ad invicem se habent ut potentia et actus. Atqui ex nuper dictis constat actus non limitari nisi per potentiam, ergo actus entitativus in

Thus, in 1931, Fabro holds that *esse* and essence are really distinct, yet does not seem to grasp fully the distinction between *existence* as the "result" or "fact" of being and *esse* as an intrinsic, constitutive principle.

Fabro's paper on the principle of causality in 1934 shows important progress in his view of the arguments for the real distinction. In the conclusions which were published in 1936, Fabro deals with the theme of "composition" and how the notion of composition demands an "author". The composition formula of the real distinction certainly provides a foundation for the relation of dependence: a composite being shows that it is constituted by actual and potential principles, since if it were *per se* sufficient, it would have to be pure act. However, in a composition, the real duality of principles points towards the fact that reality arises through the realization of a unity within a diversity: being is possible insofar as it is a "realized" unity. In a composite being, this unity is the unity of a multiplicity, a unity which is effected though participation. Thus, the principle of causality based on composition, from the point of view of its foundation, refers to another principle. The principle of causality based on participation is superior to the principle based on composition since it is applicable to both the static-structure of reality (composition) and the dynamic-causality of reality (causal dependence)[119]. Fabro, then, does not deny the value of composition in arguing for the principle of causality, but subordinates it to the arguments based on participation.

In an article entitled "Un itinéraire de saint Thomas"[120] (1938), Fabro deals specifically with St. Thomas's arguments for the real distinction and his own position that participation is the best way to argue for the distinction. In *NMP*, Fabro classifies St. Thomas's texts on the real distinction into five groups[121]. This classification is followed by a summary of *De ente et essentia*, in which three arguments for the real distinction are

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entibus contingentibus, limitatis proinde, limitari debet per suam potentiam i.e. per actum formalem, per essentiam; sed ut vidimus, ad hoc oportet distinctio realis, ergo essentia et esse realtiter distinguunter".

[119] See C. FABRO, "La difesa critica… ", *ET*, 34.

[120] See C. FABRO, "Un itinéraire de saint Thomas: L'établissement de la distinction réelle entre essence et existence", *Revue de Philosophie*, 4 (1939), 285-310; reprinted in *ET*, 89-108. See also: "Circa la divisione dell'essere in atto e potenza secondo san Tommaso", *Divus Thomas*, 42 (1939), 529-552; reprinted in *ET*, 109-136.

[121] Fabro's classification depends heavily on N. DEL PRADO, *De veritate fundamentali philosophiae christianae*, Ex Typis Consociationis Sancti Pauli, Freiburg 1911.

made, and *Summa contra Gentiles*, II, ch. 52, in which seven arguments are made. First, Fabro's classification:

[1] Arguments based on causality: The creature is caused by God, therefore there is a real distinction between essence and *esse* in creatures.
[2] Texts which draw out causality from the real distinction: Because there is a real distinction between essence and *esse* in finite *entia*, they are caused by another.
[3] Real composition demanded by the truth of judgment: The need for composition between essence and *esse* is derived from the critical demand to found the truth of judgment.
[4] Arguments based on the likeness between finite beings: Likeness supposes a composition in at least one of the members of the likeness.
[5] Arguments for the real distinction founded directly on the notion of participation: In this case participation is understood, not as extrinsic causal dependence, but in the static-structural sense[122].

M. Pangallo writes that although Fabro depends on N. Del Prado for the classification, Fabro has the merit of placing the five groups into an historical perspective of the evolution of St. Thomas's thought[123]. Group five, based on participation, is representative of the mature phase of Aquinas's speculation. The evolution is not characterized as a doctrinal one since it does not regard the understanding of the *nature* of the real distinction; it is rather a *modal* evolution. Fabro's first conclusion, then, is that in St. Thomas's youthful works, the number and variety of arguments abound. The argument that proves the real distinction from the fact that finite *ens* is caused by Being – this causality is later understood as *dynamic participation* – is the argument of the youthful St. Thomas who depends heavily on Avicenna[124]. In more mature works, however, the argument based on participation holds precedence and is sometimes the only argument offered. Fabro's thesis, Pangallo notes, should not absolutized: Pangallo concurs that there is a modal evolution, yet the consideration of dynamic

[122] C. FABRO, *NMP*, 208-211.
[123] See M. PANGALLO, *L'essere come atto*…, 35.
[124] See M. PANGALLO, *L'essere come atto*…, 36.

participation persists in St. Thomas's mature works (See *De substantiis separatis*, ch. 8)[125].

Fabro attempts to confirm his modal evolution thesis by looking at the difference between *De ente et essentia*, chap. 4 and *Summa contra Gentiles*, II, 52. In *De ente et essentia* there are three arguments, the first of which is of a logical nature. The argument hinges on the fact that the being (*esse*) of a creature is not included in its essence by expressed in its definition. The only expression is the being whose essence is identical to its being. The other two arguments are properly metaphysical: the second argument is *ex parte Dei*, there can only be one *Ipsum Esse Subsistens* (principle of separated perfection), hence in all other things *esse* inheres as in a subject; the third argument is *ex parte creaturae*, insofar as the creature receives its being from God (argument of causality)[126]. In *Summa contra Gentiles*, II, 52, seven arguments are presented. Notably absent is the logical argument. According to Fabro the first three arguments develop the second argument from *De ente et essentia* (*ex parte Dei*) while the seventh argument is formulated explicitly according to the notion of participation[127].

From this, Pangallo concludes that the heart of Fabro's study and conclusions in *NMP* concerns the presentation of transcendental participation as the *ratio propter quid* which founds the doctrine of the composition of *essentia* and *esse* in the creature[128]. This *propter quid* argument can be formulated in a syllogism as follows:

> Every creature is said to be an *ens per participationem*;
> but all that is *per participationem* needs that it be divided into participant and participated such that every *participans* is composed of participant and participated, namely, of potency and act;
> *therefore*, every creature is really composed of act and potency; of participant and participated: the participant is called essence (or *suppositum*), and the participated is called *esse* or act of being[129].

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[125] See M. PANGALLO, *L'essere come atto*…, 36.

[126] See C. FABRO, *NMP*, 211-214.

[127] See C. FABRO, *NMP*, 214-215 and 218.

[128] See M. PANGALLO, *L'essere come atto*…, 38. The phrase *ratio propter quid* is used by Fabro in *NMP*, 233 in reference to the *quarta ratio* of *De substantiis separatis*, ch. 8. Fabro writes: "It is in the response to the '*quarta ratio*' that participation is invoked, as usual, as the *ratio propter quid* of the composition of essence and the act of being, in substitution to the composition of matter and form, and with which the creature is sufficiently distinguished from God".

[129] See C. FABRO, *NMP*, 235.

Two years later, Fabro strengthened the arguments of *NMP* regarding the real distinction in *Neotomismo e suarezismo*. As regards the arguments for the real distinction, M. Pangallo notes three advances in *NS* with respect to *NMP*: "1) Fabro more clearly highlights the evolution of Thomistic thought in the confrontations with Aristotelianism, Avicennism and Averroism; 2) the author studies with philological acuteness the Thomistic terminology concerning the real distinction between essence and *esse*; 3) the problem of the real distinction is framed in its historical-cultural context"[130].

In *Metaphysica* (1948-1949), Fabro argues twice for the real distinction based on the argument of participation and includes his syllogism from *NMP*[131]. Three stages or structural principles are involved in this argument: the principle of the emergence of act; the principle of separated perfection; the principle of participation. These same principles are highlighted six years later in his article on the Fourth Way (1954)[132].

In *PC*, even though the real distinction is mentioned many times throughout the work, it is difficult to pinpoint with precision Fabro's thought on the best way to argue for it. *PC* is rather vague on the stages in determining the real distinction. Twetten notes that in *PC*, the terms "argument" or "demonstration" are only used in reference to the real distinction when Fabro refers to Aquinas's early, more-Avicennian thought.

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[130] M. PANGALLO, *L'essere come atto*…, 48.

[131] C. FABRO, *Metaphysica*, Liber secundus, 231.

[132] See D. TWETTEN, "Really Distinguishing Essence from *Esse*", 81, n. 88: "Notice the evolution in Fabro's thought and expression on this issue. In his 1939 article on the Real Distinction, he defends both what he calls the 'logico-metaphysical argument' of the First stage of *De ente* 4, and the two 'metaphysical arguments' of the Second and Third Stage; Fabro, 'Un itinéraire," 94-97. In the 1950 revision of *La nozione metafisica*, 217-22, 243-44, Fabro still distinguishes Aquinas' two logical arguments (*De ente* 4, First Stage, and the 'Genus argument') from two early metaphysical arguments (*De ente* 4, Second and Third Stages), though the logical arguments must not be taken to stand on their own (*ibid*. 219); but Fabro favors Aquinas' third and subsequently developed *mode* of metaphysical argument, couched in Participation, such as is offered in the last argument of *SCG* 2.52. In 1954, Fabro highlights the centrality of the three moments of the 'dialectic of participation' for Aquinas' metaphysics of the creature, within which *dialectic* the *argument* through participation becomes for Aquinas the *exclusive* way to *demonstrate* the Real Distinction; Fabro 'Sviluppo della IV via', 368-69".

Also, in this period Fabro rejects the use of *existentia* to refer to *esse* as a constitutive principle and argues this point extensively in *PC*[133].

In his summary of the evolution of Fabro's thought on the real distinction after *PC*, Twetten points out that the role of the "God to creatures argument" for the real distinction is unclear in Fabro's thought. Fabro seems to oscillate between placing it at the center of his argument for the real distinction and leaving it aside[134]. The other oscillation regards the role of the Biblical revelation of God as "I Am Who Am". Fabro's mature thought seems to indicate that in philosophy, the notion of creation is founded on *esse* and not the other way around[135]. Twetten concludes that

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[133] See D. TWETTEN, "Really Distinguishing Essence from *Esse*", 81-82, n. 88: "By contrast, *Participation et causalité* in 1960 does not speak of 'an argument' or 'demonstration' for the Real Distinction, except in reference to Aquinas' original Avicennian reasoning; see *Participation et Causalité*, 216, 625. […] In this final stage Fabro takes *existentia* to be a term of anti-Thomistic origin, foreign to the semantics of Thomistic metaphysics, whose appearance in Henry of Ghent and Giles of Rome is a landmark in the 'forgetfulness of being' lamented by Heidegger".

[134] See D. TWETTEN, "Really Distinguishing Essence from *Esse*", 82, n. 90. "Sometimes Fabro suggests that he does not intend to reduce his approach to the Real Distinction to a simple "God to Creatures Argument," even when he accepts such an argument (Fabro, *La nozione metafisica*, 192-205, 243-44; *Participation et causalité*, 35, 76, 83, 198-202); yet, insofar as his 'resolution' begins from pure act, which is identified with *esse*, which therefore must exist and must exist separately and uniquely, the identification of this *esse* with God is natural (See *ibid.* 198-208; "La problematica dello *esse*," 109-10). Elsewhere Fabro is explicit about the "God to Creatures" approach: Cornelio Fabro, "Elementi per una dottrina tomistica della partecipazione," in *Esegesi tomistica*, 421-48, at 433, reprinted from *Divinitas* 11 (1967): 559-86; Cornelio Fabro, *Introduzione a san Tommaso: La metafisica tomista e il pensiero moderno*, 2nd ed. (Milan, 1997), 89-90 (the 1st ed. appeared in 1983). Observe, though, that *Participation et causalité* focuses not on the Real Distinction, but on the emergence of '*esse* as act' and on the subsequent dynamic causality and semantics in Aquinas' thought. Fabro's most thorough account of the 'foundation' of the Real Distinction at the final stage of his own development is found in "Notes pour la fondation métaphysique de l'etre," where he explicitly does not appeal to God at the moment of the 'foundation', but only subsequently in completing the causal account; Fabro, 'Notes pour la fondation métaphysique de l'etre', 291-93, 309-14".

[135] See D. TWETTEN, "Really Distinguishing Essence from *Esse*", 82, n. 91: "It does not contradict Fabro's position to add that the 'first moment' of Thomist metaphysics is the Aristotelian concept of act; for, the ultimate foundation of the

Fabro's argument involves establishing *esse* as act and seeing the essence as having this act by participation. The varying intensity of the diverse participations in *esse* as act make it possible to establish the real distinction. This type of argumentation is much more solid than the logical or formal argument (whether or not something exists is not included in its definition) in which case *esse* is seen more as "*existence*" rather than a constitutive principle[136]. Twetten summarizes Fabro's argument for the real distinction in the larger context of metaphysics as follows: "Similarly, Fabro denies that the Real Distinction can be known through intuition, judgment, or deduction. It is reached only in a dialectical analysis that starts from the intensive act of being which is also identifiable with God"[137].

In slight contrast to Twetten's reading (that Fabro denies that the other arguments are valid for proving the real distinction), an interesting theoretical-speculative solution to the problem of Fabro's arguments for the real distinction is found in the conclusion to A. Contat's article on the ontological difference in twentieth-century Thomism. Contat notes that while most are in agreement that the difference between the determination of *ens* and its actuality is "preannounced" in the moment when thought reflects on its first object (*ens*), the real question hinges on the epistemological place in which one comes to the *certainty* of the real composition between essence and *esse* in finite *ens*:

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newly emergent *esse ut actus* versus the potency of essence is the Platonic notion of Participation; Fabro, *Introduzione a san Tommaso*, 85, 91. Giacon criticizes Fabro's acceptance of a biblical origin and of a 'God to Creatures' approach in his account of the Real Distinction; Carlo Giacon, 'S. Tommaso e l'esistenza come atto: Maritain, Gilson, Fabro,' in Giacon, *Itinerario tomistico* (Rome, 1983), 137-65, at 162-63. Late Fabro seems to have changed his position, insisting that Aquinas differs from previous Christian thought in that the evidence of the event of creation for him is founded on *esse* as act, rather than vice versa; Fabro, 'Intorno al fondamento dell'essere,' in *Graceful Reason*: *Essays in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy Presented to Joseph Owens, C.Ss.R.*, ed. L. Gerson (Toronto, 1983), 229-37, at 237".

[136] See D. TWETTEN, "Really Distinguishing Essence from *Esse*", 82, n. 91: "In any event, Fabro's account of the Real Distinction turns on his establishing that there is an *esse* as act containing all things *intensively* at a transcendental level, whereas essences at the predicamental level have this act only by Participation. The intensivity of *esse* is what makes it possible to establish the Real Distinction, whereas all other accounts take *esse* in a 'logical' or 'formal' sense as containing merely the minimal base of what makes something to be (*existence*)".

[137] D. TWETTEN, "Really Distinguishing Essence from *Esse*", 81-82.

> When one reflects on the initial notion of *ens*, one is certain only of an alterity between a determination that one can conceptualize as form, and an actuality which transcends the plane of form, without yet being able to establish what both the determination and the actuality are, and, hence, much less what is the real extent [*portata*] of their distinction[138].

For Contat, the syllogism found in *De ente et essentia*, ch. 4 concludes apodictically that the being-in-act in reality is other than the essence or quiddity. The "logical" argument found in *De ente et essentia*, he notes, is a demonstration *quia*, which focuses on the *fact* of the real composition. The *foundation* of the composition, however, is found by means of a demonstration *propter quid*. Such a demonstration seeks to clarify the nature of the difference and does this though a comparison of the modes of being proper to the Creator and the creature in light of the doctrine of participation[139]. Contat summarizes the three stages of our knowledge of the real distinction between essence and *esse* or ontological difference between *ens* and *esse*:

> In summary, it results that the ontological difference is revealed to the metaphysician in three original stages: it is *problematized* at the beginning of metaphysics, when the common notion of *ens* is objectivized [*si oggettiva*]; then the difference is *established*, but only by means of an argument *quia*, when, based on the quadripartition of *ens*, the notions of quiddity, the formal principle of the substance, and being-in-act, the condition of the reality of the substance, are confronted; and finally the difference is *led back to its proper fundament*, which is the participation of finite *ens* in Infinite Being, by means of the creation of a participated *esse*, when one defines the ontological status of the creature. Thus, we believe with Étienne Gilson and Cornelio Fabro that the properly metaphysical question about the being of *ens* is "resolved" in the chiaroscuro of the difference between participated being and Subsistent Being, which remains *penitus ignotum* to us in this life[140].

Both Pangallo and Contat interpret Fabro as making a distinction between a *quia* demonstration of the real distinction and a *propter quid* demonstration of the real distinction. These interpretations, in my opinion, enable us to understand Fabro's early classifications of the various arguments for the real distinction (including the argument of *De ente et essentia*) and continual

[138] A. CONTAT, "Le figure della differenza ontologica…", 234.
[139] See A. CONTAT, "Le figure della differenza ontologica…", 236-238.
[140] A. CONTAT, "Le figure della differenza ontologica…", 238.

emphasis on the role of participation in the ultimate determination of the structure of created *ens*.

3.2 Formal, predicamental causality

With the establishment of a real distinction between essence and *esse* in finite beings, the metaphysician is able to consider their causal relationship. We saw this at length in Chapter Four and need not repeat all that was said there. Here, I only offer a brief summary. The principle "*forma dat esse*" means first of all that the form provides the formal, constitutive act of the essence. The agent is the *effective* principle of *esse* and the form as the *formal* principle of *esse*: "*Est autem duplex causa essendi*: *scilicet forma per quam aliquid actu est*, *et agens quod facit actu esse*"[141]. In material substances, the form gives *esse* to matter. Secondly, the principle, "*forma dat esse*" means that there is a causal dependence of participated *esse* on form. The form acts as the "mediator" of *esse*[142]. It is through the form that the substance relates to the first principle and that matter and *ens* participate in *esse*: by the form the substance is made the proper recipient of being[143]. In conclusion, both form and *esse* are constitutive principles of beings: the form is the first, determinative and constitutive act of the essence, yet is an *actuated* act to which the other acts of the substance relate; *esse*, on the other hand, is the first act of *ens* and is the actuating act of all forms and acts in a finite *ens*[144].

4. Passage to the intensive notion of being

Fabro observes that unfortunately many philosophers stop at the "methodological notion" of *esse* and do not arrive to the metaphysical determination of intensive *esse*: "Metaphysical reflection can stop at *esse* as the realization of essence. That is the traditional meaning of '*existentia*' which indicates the 'fact' of reality in act and therefore the passage of the 'state' of essence from possibility to reality which has been described as the '*positio extra nihilum et extra causas*'"[145]. According to Fabro, the

[141] *In Librum De Causis*, lect. 26. See C. FABRO, *PC*, 341.
[142] See *De Veritate*, q. 27, a. 1 ad 3.
[143] See *Summa Contra Gentiles*, II, 55.
[144] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 354.
[145] C. FABRO, "La problematica dello *esse* tomistico", *TPM*, 104.

emergence of *esse ut actus* over *existentia* (*esse in actu*) and form was one of the original achievements of St. Thomas's speculation:

> The theoretical originality of St. Thomas's speculation with respect to classical thought – whether Platonic or Aristotelian, as well as with respect to Patristic thought and to the speculation of his time – was in the clear proposal of giving the meaning of emergent "act" par excellence to *esse*: or rather the "passage" from functional *esse* (*esse in actu*) of content-based metaphysics of the 'form' to actual *esse* (*esse ut actus*) which is *esse*, always act and only act[146].

To accomplish this passage from *esse in actu* to *esse ut actus* in metaphysical reflection, Fabro often distinguishes between a f*o*rmal reduction-emergence of *esse* (4.1) and an *actual* reduction-emergence of *esse* (4.2). *Esse* "formally" emerges over the other perfections because whatever participates in the other perfections first participates in *esse*; *esse* "actually" emerges over the other perfections since the other perfections and acts really participate in *esse* (formal reduction) and are in potency with respect to *esse* (real reduction) [147]. In *PC*, *esse* was considered in two ways: either *formally*, as the actuality of the form; or *really*, as the participated act of a concrete *ens*. The two perspectives or orders converge in *esse* which is both *actus formalis* and *actus essendi*.

4.1 Formal resolution of participated perfections

Four texts, in particular, will help us determine the nature of Fabro's proposal of formal resolution. In *NMP* (1939), Fabro outlines the nature and focus of the "formal resolution of essence". Human thought, he writes, is not closed in predicamental thought: namely, the logical-formal predication of genus with respect to its species and of the species with respect to individuals. Rather, in the metaphysical reflection that surpasses predicamental thought, the pure perfections and abstract formalities provide and promote the dialectical movement of thought which relates the various formalities to one another and to the supreme formality of being (that is only

[146] C. FABRO, "La problematica dello *esse* tomistico", *TPM*, 103.

[147] See C. FABRO, "La problematica dello *esse* tomistico", *TPM*, 109. The distinction between two ways (formally-abstractly; really-concretely) of considering *esse* is taken up again when Fabro refers to St. Thomas's commentary on Ch. 5 of Dionysius' *De Divinis Nominibus*: "In the commentary St. Thomas highlights the metaphysical emergence of *esse* within the concept of act in two moments, one formally intensive and the other actually intensive".

being). The different perfections and range of formalities: "are presented according to a progressive intensification of perfection and according to a plane that spirals upwards *by degrees*, according to a contiguity that we can call metaphysical"[148]. These perfections are ordered, in metaphysical reflection to being, according to the intensity of each one's degree of perfection. The consideration of the essence in relation to the act of being obliges the mind to transcend the univocal data of inferior abstractions and set out toward the ultimate foundation of all things: "Every formality, however perfect it may be, because it is *this* and not *that*, always lacks some real perfection" [149] and is limited and restricted in the order of being. Even if the formality can be considered as "participated in" with regard to the formalities which are inferior to it, it is always considered as a "participant" with respect to *esse*: "In relation to this 'being' every formal, generic and specific perfection, is presented as a *particular* perfection"[150].

This stage of metaphysical reflection, which, in *NMP*, is called the "formal resolution of the essence", is said to terminate in "formal being" without any specific or generic limitations or determinations[151]. In this case, *ipsum esse* includes *in se* the perfection of the other formalities without any *formal* contrariety: "Thus, this supreme *ratio* of being (since it is still abstracted if, in fact, it exists in reality), can be truly considered as the '*plexus* of all beings' and of all formalities. *Ipsum esse*, therefore, expresses the 'metaphysical transcendental totality' of which the singular perfections and formalities are only particular realizations and expressions, namely, '*PARTICIPATIONS*'"[152]. The fruit of this stage of intensive metaphysical reflection is the notion of formal, intensive *esse*[153]. Here, the notion of formal, intensive *esse* is not seen as real, participated act or God as Pure

[148] C. FABRO, *NMP*, 190.

[149] C. FABRO, *NMP*, 190.

[150] C. FABRO, *NMP*, 190.

[151] See C. FABRO, *NMP*, 191: "The ultimate term of the formal resolution of the essence is therefore the '*formal being*' that *IS*, *without* any *limitation* to genus or species; it is the Being that is *without determinations*".

[152] C. FABRO, *NMP*, 191.

[153] *In III Sent*., d. 30, q. 1, a. 2: "In omnibus illud quod est commune, vehementius est: sed illud quod est proprium plura complectitur actu; et perfectio communis est in hoc quod se extendit ad illa quae complectitur proprium, ut genus perficitur per additionem differentiae: sicut esse vehementius inhaeret quam vivere et tamen vivere aliquid complectitur actu, quod esse non habet nisi in potentia; unde perfectio esse est secundum quod se extendit ad vitam".

Act, but rather as the formal, absolute fullness of every *perfection*[154], as *esse maximum formale*, the plexus of all formal and transcendental perfections[155].

This stage of metaphysical reflection is "formal" in character since we have not in fact proved that *ipsum esse* really exists. The demonstration of the existence of *Ipsum Esse Per Se Subsistens*, Fabro notes, belongs to an ulterior stage of metaphysical reflection, which is carried out according to efficient, exemplary and final causality. This passage from the formal resolution of perfection to the real reduction to God implies a change in the notion of participation: "Participation is no longer a mere notional or conditional relationship of intelligibility, but a real relationship of threefold causality – exemplary, efficient and final –, according to a total dependence of the creature on the Creator" [156].

The Fourth Way (1954). Fabro again deals with the "formal resolution of the essence" in his 1954 article on the Fourth Way. Fabro first determines the nature of the dialectical comparison of perfections found according to a *magis et minus*. In brief, the perfections are not considered within their own "spheres", but rather in reference to being:

> All the qualities, forms, species, genera, pure perfections... can be considered with respect to a *magis et minus* not *per se*, in the strict sphere of their own sphere, but insofar as they are referred to being, insofar, that is, that they are considered as forms, modes, degrees of the perfection of being and in being. *Esse*, the perfection of the actuality of being, is the founding reference for this entire dialectic. And this because being is the primary act, the act of all acts and the perfection of all perfections – both predicamental and transcendental – which is, at the same time, the most simple and universal act, as well as the most intense[157].

The first passage – from accidental perfections to the formal sphere of species and genus – was seen earlier (2.2) and is a summary of part of the section of *NMP* on predicamental participation:

> We can therefore, speak of "ascending planes" of the dialectic in which the process of transcendence is fulfilled: from the sphere of quantity and quality, one passes, first of all, to the formal sphere of species and genus. The passage

[154] See C. FABRO, *NMP*, 197.
[155] See C. FABRO, *NMP*, 198.
[156] C. FABRO, *NMP*, 194.
[157] C. FABRO, "Sviluppo, significato e valore della *IV via*", *ET*, 376.

> here comes about in function of the predicamental perfections which permit the gradation of forms and thus determine the "metaphysical contrariety" of the essences within a genus or among the different genera according to *magis et minus*, for example, beauty, life, knowledge, etc[158].

The second passage involves the "formal resolution of perfection", the comparison of the pure perfections in reference to formal, intensive *esse*:

> A second passage is that which regards the same pure perfections, but not, though, between them and not with respect to a *magis et minus*, but rather within the same precise *ratio* of the same perfection which is *per se* a formal – and not real – actuality with respect to *esse*, and is thus considered as a "participation" in it. It is due, then, to the notion of "intensive *esse*", taken from Pseudo-Dionysius, which gives the ultimate foundation to the Thomistic dialectic of participation and permits the closure or absolute fulfillment in the Absolute of the foundation of *esse*. As one can speak of a predicamental participation for the perfections and accidental and univocal actualities, within the species and genera, so can we call "transcendental participation" that of the pure and analogous perfections with respect to *esse* which founds them and transcends them: "But whatever created form be supposed to subsist *per se*, it is necessary that it participate in *esse*; for life itself, or anything of that sort, participates in *esse* itself, as says Dionysius"[159].

For Fabro, then, the first stage of the Fourth Way is formal in character yet virtually implies the real foundation on God, as efficient and exemplary cause of all being[160]. Included in this first stage is the formal resolution of perfection. Fabro explains as follows:

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[158] C. FABRO, "Sviluppo, significato e valore della *IV via*", *ET*, 377.

[159] C. FABRO, "Sviluppo, significato e valore della *IV via*", *ET*, 377. I, q. 75, a. 5 ad 4: "Quaecumque autem forma creata per se subsistens ponatur, oportet quod participet esse, quia etiam ipsa vita, vel quidquid sic diceretur, participat ipsum esse, ut dicit Dionysius".

[160] See C. FABRO, "Sviluppo, significato e valore della *IV via*", *ET*, 379: "The only formality to which in its originary metaphysical position it belongs to reality is *esse*, precisely because all that is, both in the formal order as in the real one in whatever way it is, participates in *esse*, since the intensive act of *esse* is at the same time, as we have seen, the first act and the fullness of perfection. The conclusion of this first stage that 'if there exist *entia per participationem*, there should exist the *esse per essentiam*…' is rigorous since only the *esse* which is *per essentiam*, subsists *per se*".

> This means that all the aspects of act and of perfection which are variously dispersed and participated in other formalities and perfections, therefore, also in different references to the origin and foundation of the forms and perfections in question, are found unified in intensive *esse* and cannot be otherwise: insofar as *esse* is "*id quod est formalissimum omnium*", the formal resolution is already the foundation of the causal dependence of beings *per participationem*, in the *primum* which is *esse per essentiam*, in the *maximum*, since the formal foundation, here, virtually implies every real foundation and this in virtue of intensive *esse*[161].

La problematica dello esse *tomistico* (1959). Fabro's article clearly distinguishes the "formal reduction" of all perfections to *esse* from the "real reduction" of all perfections (and acts) to *esse*. He writes: "*Esse* as such expresses the absolute perfection and emergent plexus of all perfections, which are thus revealed [to be] participations of *esse* itself"[162]. To come to this "intensive notion", a first moment belongs to formal reduction, which is explained as follows: "'formal reduction' by means of the notion of participation, of all perfections to *esse*, insofar as they are called 'participants' in the supreme perfection which is *esse*"[163].

In *PC*, Fabro dedicates a section to the dialectic between the perfections of *esse*, *vivere* and *intelligere*. We saw earlier that the principle of *magis et minus* leads to the conclusion that essences have an intrinsic gradation of perfection[164]. Fabro notes the distinction between *esse* as *actus formalis* and *actus essendi*, the former is abstract in character, moves through the scale of predicamental perfections and pertains to the formal resolution of the essence[165]. "The *actus formalis* presents the ascendant movement of *magis et minus* in the scale of predicamental perfection that brings us to the peak of the Summit, of the Optimum, of the Perfect…, which is *Esse* (Platonic dialectic)"[166]. With regard to the dialectic between *esse*, *vivere* and *intelligere*, there are two ways of considering the three perfections:

> Dionysius says that, although *esse* itself is more perfect than life itself, and life itself than wisdom itself, if they are considered as distinguished *secundum*

[161] C. FABRO, "Sviluppo, significato e valore della *IV via*", *ET*, 382.
[162] C. FABRO, "La problematica dello *esse* tomistico", *TPM*, 108.
[163] C. FABRO, "La problematica dello *esse* tomistico", *TPM*, 109.
[164] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 221.
[165] C. FABRO, *PC*, 222.
[166] C. FABRO, *PC*, 222.

> *rationem*; nevertheless, a *vivens* is more perfect than *ens* as such, because a *vivens* is also an *ens* and a *sapiens* is both an *ens* and a living being. Although therefore *ens in se* does not include *vivens* and *sapiens*, because that which participates in *esse* need not participate in every mode of being; nevertheless God's *esse* includes in itself life and wisdom, because nothing of the perfection of being can be wanting to him who is Subsisting Being Itself[167].

Fabro concludes that we can distinguish between *ens* (*esse*) *communiter acceptum* which is molded to the quality of the participants, and *esse simpliciter acceptum* which transcends all participations and all participants. *Esse simpliciter acceptum*, includes (*praehabet*) the entire perfection of being in itself and thus surpasses life and all subsequent perfections. However, *esse* considered as participated in this or that thing, which does not possess the whole perfection of being, is more excellent when another perfection is added[168].

At the end of this stage of formal resolution, the question still remains whether or not this *ipsum esse* actually – really – exists[169]. Fabro mentioned that the real foundation is virtually included. As well, he holds that there is a "convergence" of the resolution of perfection and the resolution of act in God who is *Esse subsistens* and Pure Act. At this summit of metaphysical reflection, the two dialectics – the Platonic dialectic of form and the

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[167] I, q. 4, a. 2 ad 3: "Sicut in eodem capite idem Dionysius dicit, licet ipsum esse sit perfectius quam vita, et ipsa vita quam ipsa sapientia, si considerentur secundum quod distinguuntur ratione, tamen vivens est perfectius quam ens tantum, quia vivens etiam est ens; et sapiens est ens et vivens. Licet igitur ens non includat in se vivens et sapiens, quia non oportet quod illud quod participat esse, participet ipsum secundum omnem modum essendi, tamen ipsum esse Dei includit in se vitam et sapientiam; quia nulla de perfectionibus essendi potest deesse ei quod est ipsum esse subsistens".

[168] See I-II, q. 2, a. 5 ad 2: "Esse simpliciter acceptum, secundum quod includit in se omnem perfectionem essendi, praeeminet vitae et omnibus subsequentibus, sic enim ipsum esse praehabet in se omnia subsequentia. Et hoc modo Dionysius loquitur. Sed si consideretur ipsum esse prout participatur in hac re vel in illa, quae non capiunt totam perfectionem essendi, sed habent esse imperfectum, sicut est esse cuiuslibet creaturae; sic manifestum est quod ipsum esse cum perfectione superaddita est eminentius. Unde et Dionysius ibidem dicit quod viventia sunt meliora existentibus, et intelligentia viventibus".

[169] See L. ROMERA, *Pensar el ser*, 282: "Todo el proceso comparativo que lleva a la aparición de la *formalidad absoluta* se limita a un simple expediente de clarificación conceptual (lógica) si dicho *esse subsistens* no existe de hecho".

Aristotelian dialectic of Act – come together in the affirmation of *Esse divinum* as the supreme reality.

4.2 Real reduction of *esse participatum* to *Esse per Essentiam*

In a number of texts, Fabro refers to the "real reduction" of participated *esse* to *Esse per essentiam*. I argue in this section that this "real reduction" is carried out in accordance with the three speculative principles Fabro outlines in his 1954 article on the Fourth Way: the principle of the emergence of act, the principle of separated perfection and the principle of participation. I note that the connection between the two (real reduction and the three principles) is not made explicitly by Fabro. However, as A. Contat notes, Fabro's real reduction of participated *esse* to *Esse per essentiam* involves "actuating causality"[170]. And as we have seen, Fabro's work emphasizes the formulation of causality in terms of participation in both the predicamental and transcendental orders: "From the fact that a something is a being by participation, it follows that it is caused by another"[171]. This real reduction includes two demonstrations (demonstration existence of God, demonstration of creation), yet is not entirely reducible to demonstration[172].

4.2.1 Principle of the emergence of act

To understand this first principle of the emergence of act, it is helpful to look at Fabro's texts which use the term "emergence". Fabro's first uses of the term are found in *NMP*, where it is used four times in a non-technical fashion. For example, Fabro speaks of the "methodological emergence" of Aristotelian act and Platonic participation in St. Thomas's metaphysical synthesis[173]. More important for our understanding of the term "emergence"

[170] See A. CONTAT, "Le figure della differenza ontologica…", 120-121.

[171] I, q. 44, a. 1 ad 1: "Ex hoc quod aliquid per participationem est ens, sequitur quod sit causatum ab alio".

[172] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 238: "Il fatto poi che la 'Diremtion' definitiva di ente per partecipazione e di *esse* per essenza venga per ultima o ch'esiga un più o meno complicato processo di riflessione metafisica, ciò non significa ch'essa comporti una vera e propria dimostrazione: in realtà si tratta di un processo di 'ritorno' ovvero di una presa di possesso esplicito da parte della mente di ciò ch'era dato implicitamente nell'*ens* confuso della prima apprensione. Si tratta quindi di un processo di 'chiarificazione', di 'ostensione', ch'è un appropriamente dell'ente in se stesso ch'è già dato e presente alla coscienza nella sua attualità fin dall'inizio".

[173] See C. FABRO, *NMP*, 340.

in *NMP* is Fabro's thought on the Aristotelian principle of the priority of act over potency[174], which in later works is called the "principle of the emergence of act".

Three years later, in *Percezione e pensiero*, Fabro explained the meaning of his use of the term "emergence" and provided a Thomistic basis for his use of the term by connecting it to the Thomistic term "excedence"[175]. Perhaps the most important indication with regard to "emergence" is that it is founded on the notion of participation and deals with the metaphysical contiguity of the degrees of perfection[176]. Emergence is used by Fabro for problems in the order of being (hierarchy of beings) and in the order of knowledge (convergence of faculties)[177]. In the order of being, emergence presents the progression of ontological degrees of perfection as a "surpassing". In the order of knowing, emergence expresses the subordination of inferior levels to superior ones.

Another important text on "emergence" is found in Fabro's 1954 article on the Fourth Way and is used in the title of the first structural principle of the Fourth Way. In synthesis, the "principle of the emergence of act" principally refers to three priorities: 1) Aristotelian priority of act over potency; 2) the priority of *esse* as perfection over all other perfections; and 3) the Thomistic priority of *esse* over every other form and act. By means of

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[174] See C. FABRO, *NMP*, 334: "The entire book Θ (IX) of the *Metaphysics* is dedicated to the development of the theory of act and potency, to their mutual relations of priority, of real dependence, etc. There Aristotle resolutely affirms the absolute priority of *ens*-in-act, since this is sufficient and perfect *per se* and can move and perfect insofar as it is in potency, while it would be absurd that being-in-potency could precede being-in-act in an absolute fashion, and be the ultimate reason for the latter. Potency can have a certain priority, though limited, only in the physical order, where the predicamental agents always operate on a pre-existent subject—that is, presupposing a subjective potency which is matter".

[175] See C. FABRO, *PP*, 298.

[176] See C. FABRO, *PP*, 380: "Thomistic 'emergence' is founded—if I am not wrong—on the notion of participation, which in metaphysics supposes the real transcendence of the participated with respect to the participant and its causal immanence under the form of influence for the dynamic aspect and under the form of similitude for the static one. In the predicamental order, then, this makes us see beings order in a scaled progression, of which every inferior degree retains *in se*, in an adumbrate way, something of the perfection of the immediately superior degree, according to the Dionysian metaphysics that St. Thomas incorporated into Aristotelianism".

[177] See C. FABRO, *PP*, 602-608.

metaphysical resolution, all forms, perfections and acts are found to be in a state of potency when compared to *esse*[178]. According to Fabro's principle of the emergence of act, the subordinations of one form or act to another are always based on some participation in the emergent act.

When Fabro speaks about the emergence of act or the emergence of perfection, he usually refers to St. Thomas's "Dionysian metaphysics". In "The Problematic of Thomistic *esse*" (1959), Fabro speaks about the dialectic of perfection found in St. Thomas's *In De Divinis Nominibus*, V, n. 635 in terms of emergence (formal and actual) and reduction (formal and real). *Esse formally* emerges over the other perfections (life, wisdom, etc…), since what participates in the other perfections first participates in *esse*. *Esse actually* emerges over the other perfections since the other perfections themselves participate in *esse*. All perfections *formally* reduce to *esse* by means of the notion of participation as they are called participants in the perfection of *esse*. All perfections and other acts *really* reduce to *esse* by means of act and potency as they are in potency with respect to *esse* which is the act *par excellence*[179].

In his reflections on St. Thomas's references to and commentaries on Pseudo-Dionysius's *De Divinis Nominibus*, Fabro highlights the dialectic between *esse* and the other perfections in St. Thomas's texts which state that *esse simpliciter* surpasses all other perfections, yet *esse* with an additional perfection is more excellent. In a text from St. Thomas's mature writings, the reduction of perfections to *esse* is framed in terms of pre-supposition: "Therefore, because thinking (*intelligere*) presupposes living and living presupposes *esse*, and *esse* does not presuppose anything else prior to it, so it is that the *Primum Ens* gives *esse* to all by means of creation. But first life, whatever this may be, gives life not by means of creation but after the manner of a form, that is, by forming. And a similar account is to be given

[178] C. FABRO, "Sviluppo, significato e valore della *IV via*", *ET*, 363: "The priority of act over potency is at the basis of Aristotle's metaphysics and expresses the absolute precedence that belongs to the perfect over the imperfect and over the mere capacity of being. St. Thomas took the metaphysical emergence of *esse* over every form and every act from the Neo-platonic speculation which he was able to deepen in above all in his later years, as we have stated: this means that *esse* is the act par excellence – the actuality of every other form or reality – such that every other form, perfection or particular reality is found to be in a state of 'potency' with respect to *esse*, in this ultimate metaphysical resolution of that which is nevertheless presented as imperfect and finite".

[179] See C. FABRO, "La problematica dello *esse* tomistico", *TPM*, 109.

of intelligence"[180]. The additional perfections do not reduce to several different perfections but to one: "Although participated goods in creatures are different 'reasons', nevertheless they are related to one another and one includes the other and one is founded on the other; just as 'to live' is included in 'to understand', and 'to be' is included in 'to live'; and therefore, do not *reduce* into diverse principle, but into one"[181]. Fabro calls this "reduction" a "*reductio transcendentalis* that constitutes the metaphysical emergence of Thomistic *esse* as first act"[182]. In this case, emergence refers once again to the priority of *esse* over other acts and perfections and the participation proper to other acts and perfections in *esse*.

Fabro's *PC* also contains many references to the principle of the emergence of act. In *PC*, the term "emergent" is used together with "intensive" when speaking about *esse ut actus*. Intensive *esse* is "emergent" because it "emerges" over (has priority over) all other (formal) perfections[183] and acts. Participation also demands the ontological *emergence* of the cause, "which has the act *per essentiam*, over the effect, which has the act *per participationem*"[184]. With regard to formal and efficient causality and the emergence of *esse*, Fabro notes that the production of *esse* is properly an effect of efficient causality, yet within the structure of *ens* and according to the principle of the emergence of act, *esse* is the proper object of the form: "Therefore, it is the substantial form that is the proper cause of *esse* in beings, with respect to its matter and according to the degree of the form and the mode of dependence of the form on

[180] *In Librum De Causis*, lect. 18 : "Quia ergo intelligere praesupponit vivere et vivere praesupponit esse, esse autem non praesupponit aliquid aliud prius; inde est quod primum ens dat esse omnibus per modum creationis. Prima autem vita, quaecumque sit illa, non dat vivere per modum creationis, sed per modum formae, id est informationis; et similiter dicendum est de intelligentia".

[181] *In I Sent.*, d. 2 q. 1 a. 1 ad 1: "Quamvis bonitates participatae in creaturis sint differentes ratione, tamen habent ordinem ad invicem et una includit alteram et una fundatur super altera; sicut in intelligere includitur vivere, et in vivere includitur esse; et *ideo non reducuntur in diversa principia, sed in unum*".

[182] C. FABRO, "La problematica dello *esse* tomistico", *TPM*, 106.

[183] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 224-225: "The 'passage to the limit' from *ens* to *esse* embraces the entire itinerary of *magis et minus* in the sphere of the *esse essentiae* and culminates in the absolute position of *Esse separatum*; in this way the emergence of *esse* is actuated by means of the intensification of *ens* with its real formal perfections".

[184] C. FABRO, *PC*, 328.

matter"[185]. Fabro also clarifies the correspondence between being and act according to the principle of the emergence of act: "The act which is in the identity of itself coincides with being, the act which is participated is the constitutive principle of being (*ut quo*) in *ens* according to the order to which it pertains: this is the very formula of the principle of the emergence of act"[186].

Within the structure of created being, *esse* as *actus essendi* emerges over form: even if the form be subsistent (like that of an angel), is said to be potency and in potency with respect to *esse*[187]. With respect to God:

> *Esse per essentiam*, demands the absolute fullness of perfection in absolute simplicity (emergence of intensive *esse*); in the creature having *esse per participationem* implies the division and the real composition, namely, the division in the multiplicity of the created essences of the fullness of perfection of divine *esse* and the composition in every creature of their essence or perfection with the proper act of being (*esse*) according to the metaphysical demand of the *Diremtion* of being[188].

Concerning the doctrine of analogy, Fabro holds that after dealing with the structure and composition of *ens* and the foundation of *esse* by means of causality, the problem of analogy and the predication of being is resolved "by means of the 'reduction' to the fundamental notion of participation according to the absolute emergence that the notion of intensive *esse* assumes in Thomism"[189]. As we have seen, the analogy of attribution is, according to Fabro, the foundation for the analogy of proportionality, since "it grasps and expresses the *esse* of being in its emergence as participated act with regard to the unparticipated Act. In this sense it can be said that analogy of proportionality presupposes, and is based

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[185] C. FABRO, *PC*, 351.

[186] C. FABRO, *PC*, 351.

[187] C. FABRO, *PC*, 636: "St. Thomas, and he alone, proclaims the absolute emergence of *esse* as act of all acts and of all forms: [there are] then forms and acts which 'fall' into the condition of potency or the receptive "capacity" of the act of being. (See *Div. Nom. c. v, lect. 1*, n. 635). As form precedes matter and transcends it, so also *esse* which is the act and perfection of the essence precedes and transcends the form and essence of which it is the act: *esse* is the primary emergent Act and thus can be assumed as the highest determination of God (*Esse subsistens*, *Esse ipsum...*).

[188] C. FABRO, *PC*, 500-501.

[189] C. FABRO, *PC*, 524.

upon, analogy of attribution". This means that *esse* does not pertain to the creature (*ens per participationem*) except by participation in the Creator (*Esse per essentiam*) and "that *esse* does not belong to accident (*ens secundum quid*) otherwise than by participation in substance (*ens simpliciter*)". Fabro concludes that *esse* is the intensive, emergent act since it is the constitutive act (and actuating act) of *ens*.

Another key text to understanding Fabro's use of the term "emergence" is found in his 1967 *New Catholic Encyclopedia* entry on "Existence". He refers to the apprehension of *esse* as a type of "dialectical emergence" and explains both terms. Act "emerges" as a first principle and foundation": "[The apprehension of *esse*] is a 'dialectical' kind of knowledge to the extent that *esse* as such is act and not content; thus the apprehension of *esse* occurs 'by emergence,' whereby the concept of act is approached as a first principle and foundation, and so reveals the ultimate stage of agreement between intellect and reality"[190].

The last text that helps us understand Fabro's use of "emergence" and the "principle of the emergence of act" is found in his 1989 article on "The Emergence of Thomistic *esse* over Aristotelian Act". He writes that Aristotle's discovery or intuition of the "primacy (emergence) of act over potency" is one of the greatest in Western thought. He then clarifies the meaning of the term "emergence":

> "Emergence" means the ontological or logical priority – in being or in knowing – of act over potency, since potency is understood as the capacity of producing (active potency) or of receiving (passive potency) act, be it in the sphere of categorical becoming or in the transcendental sphere of being (*essere*) itself[191].

Fabro concludes the article speaking about the culminate moment of metaphysics and the emergence of *actus essendi*: "And now the conclusion of this double participation and thus double emergence, not only of the act over the potency according to the classical Aristotelian scheme, but of act over act which is the theoretical conquest of Aquinas […]. Here, the dialectical resolution comes to its end, deepening itself in the principle, *esse*, which is the principle of all principles and the act of all acts"[192].

In summary, Fabro uses the term "emergence":

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[190] C. FABRO, "Existence", 724.
[191] C. FABRO, "L'emergenza dello *Esse* tomistico…", 151.
[192] C. FABRO, "L'emergenza dello *esse* tomistico…", 174

[1] with respect to the Aristotelian principle of the emergence or (ontological) priority of act over potency;
[2] to refer to the (logical) priority of the concept of *ens* over all other concepts, the (logical) priority of *ens* over the other transcendentals and the (logical) priority of *esse* over all other verbs;
[3] to refer to intensive *esse* insofar as *actus essendi* emerges over all other acts and perfections;
[4] in reference to the twofold resolution of participated perfection and participated act: *esse* formally emerges over the other perfections because whatever participates in the other perfections first participates in *esse*; *esse* actually emerges over the other acts and perfections since the other acts and perfections are in potency with respect to *esse*;
[5] in the term "dialectical emergence" insofar as this characterizes the dynamic of our apprehension of *esse* in metaphysical reflection and insofar as what is apprehended is grasped as an act and first principle in reference to a participation and not "abstracted" as a "content";
[6] with respect to the priority of the cause over the effect; and
[7] with respect to the ultimate emergence of Pure Act or Subsistent Being over all other participated acts.

In brief, "emergence" is a term which is based on or refers to a foundational participation and indicates the priority and primacy of some principle, cause or foundation.

With regard to the content of the principle of the emergence of act, we are dealing with the fundamental priority of act over potency. In the formal resolution of perfection, *esse* emerges over all other perfections; in the resolution of act, *actus essendi* emerges over all other acts. *Esse* is the actuating act of all other acts and is not limited by itself, but rather by the essence which "receives" it and limits it to a certain degree (of perfection and act). Thus, at this stage of metaphysical reflection, we are dealing with a principle which summarizes the previous stages of the formal resolution of perfection and the real resolution of act, both of which end in *esse* as either "formal (intensive) *esse*" or "participated *actus essendi*".

4.2.2 Principle of separated perfection

The fact that *esse* or *actus essendi* is seen as participated by the created substance or limited by the substance's essence, leads to the next

principle of metaphysical reflection, that of separated perfection. This transition from participated *esse* to *Esse per essentiam* was dealt with in some of Fabro's earliest works, such as his 1936 article on the principle of causality. Fabro is inspired by the participation formula of the principle of causality found in *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 44, a. 1 ad 1: "From the fact that a something is a being by participation, it follows that it is caused by another"[193]. The dialectic of metaphysical reflection relates the imperfections and deficiencies of reality to their participative nature and then embarks on a passage to that which is *per essentiam* and, consequently, to the cause of what is *per participationem*: "This principle is called first Being, Being *per essentiam*, One *per essentiam* because it should realize *in se*, fully, that reality which it pours out on the others and that, at the same time, because of its purity, places it outside and above the series"[194]. Being *per participationem* is not understood unless it is seen in relation to *Esse per essentiam*: "The *esse* which is in created things, cannot be understood, unless as deducted from divine *esse*"[195].

The passage from participated *esse* to *Esse per essentiam* is dealt with at length in Fabro's 1965 article on the metaphysical foundation of the Fourth Way. Fabro considers several principles: 1) "Everything that is *imperfect* in a genus arises from that in which the nature of the genus is first and perfectly found to be"[196]; 2) "For whatever belongs to a thing otherwise than as such, belongs to it through some cause, as white to a man"[197]; "That which belongs to a thing by its nature, and not by some other cause, cannot be diminished and deficient therein"[198]. 3) "The order of causes must needs correspond to the order of effects…. Wherefore, as proper effects are

[193] I, q. 44, a. 1 ad 1: "Ex hoc quod aliquid per participationem est ens, sequitur quod sit causatum ab alio".

[194] C. FABRO, "La difesa critica…", *ET*, 41.

[195] See *De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 5, ad 1: "Esse quod rebus creatis inest, non potest intelligi, nisi ut deductum ab esse divino". See also C. FABRO, "La difesa critica…", *ET*, 41.

[196] *In II Sent*., d. 1, q. 1, a. 2: "Constat enim quod omne quod est in aliquo genere imperfectum, oritur ab eo in quo primo et perfecte reperitur natura generis: sicut patet de calore in rebus calidis ab igne".

[197] *Summa contra Gentiles*, II, ch. 15: "Omne enim quod alicui convenit non secundum quod ipsum est, per aliquam causam convenit ei, sicut album homini".

[198] *Summa contra Gentiles*, II, ch. 15: "Quod alicui convenit ex sua natura, non ex alia causa, minoratum in eo et deficiens esse non potest. Si enim naturae aliquid essentiale subtrahitur vel additur, iam altera natura erit: sicut et in numeris accidit".

reduced to their proper causes, so that which is common in proper effects must needs be reduced to some common cause: … Now being is common to all. Therefore above all causes there must be a cause to which it belongs to give being"[199]; 4) "The more universal an effect, the higher its proper cause… Now *esse* is more universal than to be moved… It follows therefore that above the cause which acts only by causing movement and change, there is that cause which is the first principle of being"[200]; 5) "That which is said *per essentiam* is the cause of all which is said to be by participation: as fire is the cause of all fiery things insofar as likewise. God then is *ens* by his essence: since he is *ipsum esse*. Now all other *ens* is *ens* by participation: since the *ens* that is his *esse*: cannot be but one"[201]. Such principles argue from the commonness of participated *esse* to the need for a universal cause of *esse* that does not have *esse* in a deficient manner, but rather is *esse* "*per essentiam*". It is here that the principle of separated perfection comes into play, as a continuation of the principle of the emergence of act.

According Fabro, the "principle of separated perfection" is founded on the metaphysical notion of act as pure and absolute perfection: act emerges *per se* over potency, and, for this reason, ultimately, must be free from all potency and be pure act. The principle states simply that this Pure Act or Separated Perfection is unique: "perfection insofar as it is a pure perfection or 'separated from every potency'…cannot be conceived except as 'unique'"[202]. Pure *esse*, therefore, is also unique and exists as such due to its position as the act of all forms and other actualities. "In fact, pure *esse* is the unique act that subsists separated in reality and it is this act of subsisting

[199] *Summa contra Gentiles*, II, ch. 15: "Secundum ordinem effectuum oportet esse ordinem causarum: [...]. Unde oportet quod, sicut effectus proprii reducuntur in causas proprias, ita id quod commune est in effectibus propriis, reducatur in aliquam causam communem: [...]. Omnibus autem commune est esse. Oportet igitur quod supra omnes causas sit aliqua causa cuius sit dare esse".

[200] *Summa contra Gentiles*, II, ch. 16: "Quanto aliquis effectus est universalior, tanto habet propriam causam altiorem: [...]. Esse autem est universalius quam moveri: [...]. Oportet ergo quod supra causam quae non agit nisi movendo et transmutando, sit illa causa quae est primum essendi principium".

[201] *Summa contra Gentiles*, II, ch. 15: "Quod per essentiam dicitur, est causa omnium quae per participationem dicuntur: sicut ignis est causa omnium ignitorum inquantum huiusmodi. Deus autem est ens per essentiam suam: quia est ipsum esse. Omne autem aliud ens est ens per participationem: quia ens quod sit suum esse non potest esse nisi unum ut in primo ostensum est. Deus igitur est causa essendi omnibus aliis".

[202] C. FABRO, "Sviluppo, significato e valore della *IV via*", *ET*, 365.

separated *esse* that is the end of the Fourth Way: God as *esse per essentiam*". Fabro finds the principle stated in Thomistic texts such as the following: "Just as it is impossible to understand that there are many separate whitenesses, but if there were 'whiteness' apart from every subject and recipient, there would be but one whiteness, so it is impossible to have an *Ipsum Esse Subsistens* unless there is but one"[203].

While duly recognizing the Platonic background of the principle, Fabro also holds that St. Thomas transformed the principle in that it is not applied to form as such but to *esse* alone: "This principle of separated perfection is eminently of Platonic origin and must be integrated with the Aristotelian principle of the emergence of act. Both principles are indeed founded on the synthetic Thomistic principle of participation. But despite his general acceptance of the Platonic principle of separated perfection, Thomas follows Aristotle in rejecting its application to the forms as such and, going beyond Aristotle who does not know *esse* as act, applies it exclusively to *esse*. Thus *Esse ipsum* or *Esse subsistens* is God himself who is the first, immovable, and separated Principle situated, as it were, at the summit of eternity (*in arce aeternitatis*)"[204].

The consequence of the principle of separated perfection is that all other natures and forms outside of God (*Esse per essentiam*) are seen as *entia per participationem*. To exemplify this "tension" between *Esse per essentiam* and *entia per participationem*, St. Thomas turns to the examples of the sun that illuminates the air (Plato), of fire that heats bodies (Aristotle), of pure whiteness which is participated in various subjects (St. Thomas's own example): "If a form or nature is totally separate and simple, there cannot be a multitude in it: as if whiteness were totally separate, there would only be one"[205].

The principle of separated perfection, is invoked in many of Fabro's works. One of the first instances is found in *Metaphysica*, where Fabro expounds on the principle as follows:

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[203] *De spiritualibus creaturis*, a. 1: "Hoc autem non potest dici de aliquo alio: sicut enim impossibile est intelligere quod sint plures albedines separatae; sed si esset albedo separata ab omni subiecto et recipiente, esset una tantum; ita impossibile est quod sit ipsum esse subsistens nisi unum tantum".

[204] C. FABRO, "The Intensive Hermeneutics…", 487-488.

[205] *In Liber De Causis*, lect. 4: "Si aliqua forma vel natura sit omnino separata et simplex, non potest in ea cadere multitudo, sicut, si aliqua albedo esset separata, non esset nisi una: nunc autem inveniuntur multae albedines diversae quae participant albedinem".

> This principle is founded on the notion of act itself and expresses its ultimate "emergence" over form and also over any potency. *Act is something ultimate in its genus and, therefore, also unique*, because every act is defined and exists by the presence and possession of itself. Thus, everything that is act "*per essentiam*" does not depend on another in its order, nor needs to being or form a composite with another, but rather is and consists in itself. Thus, only one Pure Act exists, which is pure *Esse*: God. […] Consequently, the remaining things after this one, first and simple, are not such *per essentiam* but only *per participationem*, insofar as they receive that perfection in some potentiality to which that perfection *per se* is limited and in which, in some way, falls from its metaphysical purity[206].

In *PC*, Fabro highlights the role of the principle in the resolution of being and establishment of the distinction between essence and *esse*: "The determination of *ens per participationem* […] is shown […] by means of the process of the 'reduction' of *ens* to *esse* in the first phase of ascendant metaphysical reflection which is that of the manifestation of the *esse* of *ens*. The Thomistic distinction, therefore, of essence and *esse*, on which the definitive determination of *ens participationem* is founded on – comes from – the very 'resolution' of the *esse* of *ens* that St. Thomas expressed by means of the principle of '*perfectio separata*'"[207].

In his 1954 article on the Fourth Way, Fabro deals with the application of the principle in the proof of the existence of a *maximum formale* and the connected analogies of heat, fire and whiteness. The metaphysics behind the examples of *magis et minus* is that all that has some perfection or actuality in an imperfect way (according to degrees) "participates" in this perfection and is not this same perfection: "The metaphysical principle is blindingly obvious: a perfection which is possessed *per se* cannot be found diminished, participated by degrees and in more subjects…: the perfection in the pure state should be unchained from the limits, from the subjects, it should be such *per essentiam*"[208]. The analogy involved in the examples tries to indicate the transcendence of the *maximum* with respect to the degrees: "Every perfection which is found according to a *magis et minus* and thus shown to be participated refers to the perfection which is such *per essentiam*, namely to the pure essence of that

[206] C. FABRO, *Metaphysica*, Liber secundus, 228-229".
[207] C. FABRO, *PC*, 233.
[208] C. FABRO, "Sviluppo, significato e valore della *IV via*", *ET*, 378.

perfection, it therefore demands the position of corresponding '*perfectio subsistens*' or as St. Thomas also says *perfectio separata*'"[209].

For Fabro, the second stage of the Fourth Way (the passage from the *maximum* in a scale of degrees of perfection to the *maximum* as principle and cause of that perfection), is not an illation, but rather a simple explicitation based on the first stage and the passage from *magis et minus* to the *maximum*. With regard to the example of fire and heat, St. Thomas affirms in *Summa contra Gentiles*, III, ch. 64 that certain things are hotter to the degree according as they are near to a fire. This shows that the fire is the cause of their heat. With regard to being, that which is most truly and primarily called *ens* is that whose *esse* is identical to its essence and, since it is subsistent, is not received in something else. In those things which are said to be *per prius et posterius*, the first of those things that are can be said to be the cause and is said *per se* to be the cause of those that are *per participationem*. The *ens* which is not called *ens per participationem* and which is first among being, is the cause of all other beings[210].

Fabro approaches the exemplary-efficient causality proper to the *Esse per essentiam* by means of the "dialectic of measure" proper to the Fourth Way, noting that: "in the transcendental order of the perfections as such with respect to intensive *esse*, this *esse* which is the supreme measure is also the first cause"[211]. An explanation of the measuring proper to being is found in Aquinas's *In Liber De causis*, lect. 16[212] and *In De Divinis Nominibus*, IV, lect. 3, n. 310[213]. Based on such texts, Fabro concludes that the absolute perfection of *esse* is the very measure with respect to which one can establish the degree of reality and of perfection of the participants in perfection.

Coming now to the role of exemplary-efficient causality, Fabro states that in the "definitive metaphysical *resolutio*" of the transcendental

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[209] C. FABRO, "Sviluppo, significato e valore della *IV via*", *ET*, 378.

[210] See *In II Sent*., d. 37, q. 1, a. 2.

[211] C. FABRO, "Sviluppo, significato e valore della *IV via*", *ET*, 381.

[212] "Ens primum esse mensuram omnium entium, quia creavit omnia entia cum debita mensura quae convenit unicuique rei secundum modum suae naturae: quod enim aliqua magis vel minus accedant ad ipsum, est ex eius dispositione".

[213] "Ostendit quam habitudinem habeat divina bonitas ad res iam productas; et dicit, primo, quod habet habitudinem mensurae. Est enim mensura existentium, quia ex hoc potest sciri quantum unumquodque existentium habeat de nobilitate essendi, quod appropinquat ei vel distat ab eo, sicut si dicamus albedinem esse mensuram omnium colorum, quia unusquisque color est tanto nobilior, quanto albedini propinquior".

participation of all formalities and perfections in *esse* "the moments of efficient, final, exemplary and formal causality flow together and coincide"[214]. Fabro clearly refers to the distinction between a formal resolution of perfection according to the notion of participation and a real resolution (foundation) according to efficient and exemplary causality[215]. Fabro offers one more text to support of his interpretation, a text which he argues recognizes the implications between the "eminence of perfection and causality":

> And if one should consider the order of things, he will always find that that which is the maximum is the cause of the *esse* of those things are after it; just as fire which is hottest, is the cause of heat in other elementary bodies. Now the First Principle which we call God is *maxime ens*. For in the order of things, we cannot proceed to infinity, but must come to something highest; because it is better to be one than to be many. But that which is better in the universe, must necessarily be because the universe depends on the essence of God's goodness. Therefore the *primum ens* must of necessity be the cause of being for all[216].

Fabro concludes his exposition of the Fourth Way, highlighting the three consequent moments to the principle of separated perfection: 1) creation as the total dependence of the creature on God; 2) the real distinction and the fundamental difference of the creature from God; 3) analogy as the fundamental semantics which expresses the relationship of the creature to God[217].

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[214] C. FABRO, "Sviluppo, significato e valore della *IV via*", *ET*, 381.

[215] *In I Sent*., d. 19, q. 5, a. 2. See I, q. 6, a. 4: "Sic ergo unumquodque dicitur bonum bonitate divina, sicut primo principio exemplari, effectivo et finali"; *Summa contra Gentiles* III, 65 "Esse autem cuiuslibet rei est esse participatum: cum non sit res aliqua praeter Deum suum esse, ut supra probatum Est. Et sic oportet quod ipse Deus, qui est suum esse, sit primo et per se causa omnis esse".

[216] *De substantiis separatis*, ch. 9: "Si quis ordinem rerum consideret, semper inveniet id quod est maximum causam esse eorum quae sunt post ipsum; sicut ignis, qui est calidissimus, causa est caliditatis in ceteris elementatis corporibus. Primum autem principium, quod Deum dicimus, est maxime ens. Non enim est in infinitum procedere in rerum ordine, sed ad aliquid summum devenire, quod melius est esse unum quam plura. Quod autem in universo melius est, necesse est esse, quia universum dependet ex essentia bonitatis eius; necesse est igitur primum ens esse causam essendi omnibus".

[217] See C. FABRO, "Sviluppo, significato e valore della *IV via*", *ET*, 382-383: "We can recognize then that the Fourth Way, interpreted by means of the dialectic

These reflections on the Fourth Way were completed in Fabro's article on "The Metaphysical Foundation of the Fourth Way" (1965). The article begins by mentioning the difficulty of the passage from the formal plane of perfection to the real plane of causality and by referring to the principle of separated perfection: "The principle and the term of *esse subsistens* or *per essentiam*, to indicate God or the discovery of *esse* as pure and primary act or as the '*perfectio separata*' *per essentiam*, is proper to St. Thomas"[218]. The key to the demonstration of the Fourth Way (and creation), then, is the principle of causality according to its participation formula: "From the fact that something is by participation it follows that it is caused from another"[219]; "That which is said *per essentiam* is the cause of all which is said to be by participation: as fire is the cause of all fiery things insofar as likewise. God then is *ens* by his essence: since he is *ipsum esse*. Now all other *entia* are *ens* by participation: since the *ens* that is his *esse*: cannot be but one"[220]. Fabro calls this the principle of "separated perfection" which, in Thomism, is only valid for and really applied to *esse*. The Aristotelian notion of act is applied to *esse* and only *Esse ipsum* is the *causa entis in quantum est ens*. For Fabro this is the essence of the Fourth Way. Fabro specifies that the simplicity of act leads to God as *Ipsum Suum Esse*, the intensity of act leads to God as the *plenitudo essendi*, and that the community or priority of the act of being leads to God as the proper cause of the act of being[221]. In light of this, Fabro argues that the "*resolutio in esse*" provides the authentic metaphysical foundation of the formula of the Fourth

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of the Thomistic notion of the intensive act of *esse*, is the ultimate theoretical proof and the most formal proof of the existence of God: it is not surprising then that the Thomistic text of the Johannine Prologue, that we have chosen as the most complete formula of our way, embraces and founds, at the same time, the total dependence of the creature on God (creation) and the fundamental difference of the creature from God (the real distinction of essence and *esse*) as well as the fundamental semantics to express the relation of the creature to God (analogy)".

[218] C. FABRO, "Il fondamento metafisico della *IV via*", *ET*, 399.

[219] I, q. 44, a. 1 ad 1: "Ex hoc quod aliquid est per participationem sequitur quod sit causatum ab alio".

[220] *Summa contra Gentiles*, II, ch. 15: "Quod per essentiam dicitur, est causa omnium quae per participationem dicuntur: sicut ignis est causa omnium ignitorum inquantum huiusmodi. Deus autem est ens per essentiam suam: quia est ipsum esse. Omne autem aliud ens est ens per participationem: quia ens quod sit suum esse non potest esse nisi unum ut in primo ostensum est. Deus igitur est causa essendi omnibus aliis".

[221] C. FABRO, "Il fondamento metafisico della *IV via*", *ET*, 402.

Way of the *Summa Theologiae*. The radical commonness of *esse* requires a common cause, capable of producing *esse* from nothing[222]. Fabro's analysis of St. Thomas's philosophical historiography shows how metaphysics ought to progress from the phenomenon of accidental change and the distinction between substance and accidents through the problem of substantial change and to the problem of creation in light of the distinction between essence and *esse*[223].

In light of these considerations, we can conclude that Fabro's principle of separated perfection marks the transition from the formal resolution (assumed under the principle of the emergence of act), which ends in *ipsum esse* as that in which all other perfections, acts and formalities participate, to the real resolution according to efficient, exemplary and final causality.

4.2.3 Principle of participation

The third principle is that of participation, which, in turn, constitutes the foundation for the first two principles: "This principle of '*perfectio separata*' is exquisitely Platonic and is completed, in its turn, by the Aristotelian principle of the 'emergence of act': both principles are founded on the synthetic Thomistic principle of participation"[224]. In *NMP*, participation was ultimately described as that which "expresses both the essential dependence of the participant on the participated and the absolute metaphysical excedence of the participated with respect to the participant. 'Participation' expresses […] the relation that finite *ens* has with infinite Being, the creature with the Creator"[225]. In *PC*, participation was described in terms of the realization of the presence of the One in the many: "'To participate' is having-together, but is, at the same time, not-being the act and

[222] *De Potentia*, q. 7, a. 2: "Si [aliquae causae] in aliquo uno effectu conveniunt, ille non est proprius alicuius earum, sed alicuius superioris, in cuius virtute agunt; [...]. Omnes autem causae creatae communicant in uno effectu qui est esse, licet singulae proprios effectus habeant, in quibus distinguuntur. Calor enim facit calidum esse, et aedificator facit domum esse. Conveniunt ergo in hoc quod causant esse, sed differunt in hoc quod ignis causat ignem, et aedificator causat domum. Oportet ergo esse aliquam causam superiorem omnibus cuius virtute omnia causent esse, et eius esse sit proprius effectus.Et haec causa est Deus".

[223] St. Thomas's *De substantiis separatis*, ch. 9, speaks of a resolution into principles (resolution into matter and form; resolution into *id quod est* and *esse*).

[224] C. FABRO, "Sviluppo, significato e valore della *IV via*", *ET*, 365.

[225] C. FABRO, *NMP*, 344.

perfection [in] which one participates, precisely because one only participates"[226].

Fabro's article on the Fourth Way specifies that the principle of participation has both a "static or constitutive moment" (insofar as beings are said to participate in *esse*) and a "dynamic moment" (insofar as God is the cause of all *esse*)[227]. Ultimately, the being (*esse*) and operation (*agere*) of the creature are articulated in relation to their Creator. However, the notion of *ens per participationem* is not merely a secondary aspect, consequent on the demonstration of the existence of God. Rather, the very metaphysical nexus of the creature involves the dialectic of participation and so the notion of participation is used to demonstration the existence of God (Fourth Way), the primary dependence and derivation of the creature from God (creation) and the primary composition of the creature (the real distinction). Fabro emphasizes at length the importance of *De substantiis separatis* for the articulation of the principles of separated perfection and participation: first, the principle of separated perfection: "There is, therefore, only one *esse* subsisting *per se*. Hence it is impossible that other than it, there should be something which is *esse* alone. Now everything that is, has *esse*. Therefore in every being other than the first, there is present both *esse* itself as the act, and the substance of the thing having *esse* as a potency receptive of this act which is *esse*"[228]; second, the principle of participation, both in its dynamic and structural aspects:

> For, since it is necessary that the First Principle be most simple, this must of necessity be said to be not as participating in *esse* but as itself being *esse*. But because subsistent *esse* can be only one, as was pointed out above, then necessarily all other things under it must be as participating in *esse*. Therefore there must take place a certain common resolution in all such things according

[226] C. FABRO, *PC*, 629-630. See *In I Metaph*., lect. 10, n. 154: "Quod enim totaliter est aliquid, non participat illud, sed est per essentiam idem illi. Quod vero non totaliter est aliquid habens aliquid aliud adiunctum, proprie participare dicitur. Sicut si calor esset calor per se existens, non diceretur participare calorem, quia nihil esset in eo nisi calor. Ignis vero quia est aliquid aliud quam calor, dicitur participare calorem".

[227] C. FABRO, "Sviluppo, significato e valore della *IV via*", *ET*, 367.

[228] *De substantiis separatis*, ch. 8: "Ipsum igitur esse per se subsistens est unum tantum. Impossibile est igitur quod praeter ipsum sit aliquid subsistens quod sit esse tantum. Omne autem quod est, esse habet. Est igitur in quocumque, praeter primum, et ipsum esse, tanquam actus; et substantia rei habens esse, tanquam potentia receptiva huius actus quod est esse".

> as each of them is reduced by the intellect into that which is and its *esse*. Therefore, above the mode of coming to be, by which something becomes when form comes to matter, we must presuppose another origin for things according as *esse* is bestowed upon the whole universe of things by the First Being that is its own *esse*[229].

Hence, in this section I consider: first, Fabro's thought (and Neo-Thomistic thought) on the interplay between efficient causality and exemplary causality in the creation of finite *ens*; and, second, Fabro's thought on the role of the created essence in the structure of finite *ens*.

4.2.3.1 Causal participation and creation

To understand Fabro's work on causal participation and creation, it is helpful to also look at the development of the theme in other Thomists who critique Fabro's thought, second it, add to it or modify it. In particular, we will look at the contributions of L.-B. Geiger, J. M. Artola, J. Wippel, J. Aertsen, R. te Velde J. Pérez Guerrero and G. Doolan to the debate and their evaluations of Fabro's work[230]. In this way, the two main proposals – those

[229] *De substantiis separatis*, ch. 9: "Sed ultra hunc modum fiendi necesse est, secundum sententiam Platonis et Aristotelis, ponere alium altiorem. Cum enim necesse sit primum principium simplicissimum esse, necesse est quod non hoc modo esse ponatur quasi esse participans, sed quasi ipsum esse existens. Quia vero esse subsistens non potest esse nisi unum, sicut supra habitum est, necesse est omnia alia quae sub ipso sunt, sic esse quasi esse participantia. Oportet igitur communem quamdam resolutionem in omnibus huiusmodi fieri, secundum quod unumquodque eorum intellectu resolvitur in id quod est, et in suum esse. Oportet igitur supra modum fiendi quo aliquid fit, forma materiae adveniente, praeintelligere aliam rerum originem, secundum quod esse attribuitur toti universitati rerum a primo ente, quod est suum esse".

[230] For a summary of the debate and the some of the positions, see G. ROCCA, *Speaking the Incomprehensible God*, CUA Press, Washington DC 2004, 282-283, n. 95: "Geiger thinks there are two separate systems of participation in Aquinas: participation by composition and participation by similitude in the hierarchy of beings (pp. 77-217, 223-307), but Fabro thinks Aquinas only teaches the former kind, which is based on the distinction between essence and existence in creatures (*Nozione*, pp. 20-23; *Participation*, pp. 63-73). Te Velde leans to Fabro's more unity view but criticizes his theory of participation by composition because it invariably implies an essence that must "exist" somehow before it is composed with *esse*; referring to Aquinas' account of God's seamless creative act, te Velde argues for just one type of participation in Aquinas, which is grounded in the real

of Fabro and Geiger, as well as the areas of improvement, will be brought to light.

Fabro's *NMP* dealt principally with structural participation, yet contains some summary remarks on the need to address the theme of "dynamic-causal participation" according to the three extrinsic causalities:

- "Participation is […] a real relationship of ternary causality – exemplar, efficient and final –, according to a total dependence of the creature on the Creator"[231];
- "Thomism has responded to this problem by making recourse precisely to the transcendental notion of participation applied under a twofold aspect: *first of all* A) as *extrinsic causality*: exemplar, efficient and final; then B) as *intrinsic real composition* in the order of being"[232];
- "The problem of the relationship between formal causality and efficient causality in the sphere of participation, I reserve, then, for a later moment"[233].

In *PC*, Fabro concentrates on transcendental causal participation according to efficient causality and on the relationship between formal causality and God's efficient causality, yet leaves aside an in-depth investigation of exemplary and final causality.

Three years after Fabro's *NMP*, L.-B. Geiger published his influential *La participation dans la philosophie de s. Thomas d'Aquin* (1942), in which

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distinction between being and essence in creatures (pp. 76-116, 184-206). Montagnes (*Doctrine*, pp. 45-60) confirms Geiger's view: Aquinas teaches both a participation by way of formal likeness based on God's exemplary formal causality and a participation by way of composition based on God's efficient causality, but the former is underscored in the *Sentences*, while the latter is accentuated beginning with the *Summa contra Gentiles*. Wippel agrees that Aquinas teaches two types of participation—by composition and by assimilation or imitation—and argues against te Velde that participation by composition does not imply that a creaturely essence must possess some sort of actual reality in itself before it is created with its corresponding act of being in an actual creature (*Metaphysical Thought*, pp. 129-31). Jan Aertsen concurs with Montagnes and Wippel (*Nature and Creature: Thomas Aquinas's Way of Thought*, trans. H. D. Morton [Leiden: Brill, 1988], pp. 182-90)".

[231] C. FABRO, *NMP*, 194.

[232] C. FABRO, *NMP*, 201.

[233] C. FABRO, *NMP*, 346, n. 23. Fabro is referring to *PC*.

he proposes a Thomistic synthesis of two "systems" of participation[234]. The first system is called "participation by composition" and is defined as "the *reception* and consequently the *possession* of an element playing the role of form by a subject playing the role of matter"[235]. In this case, the receiving subject is less perfect than the perfection it receives and the limitation of the perfection is a *consequence* of the composition itself. The second system of participation is called "participation by similitude" or "participation by formal hierarchy" and accounts for "the diminished, particularized, and, in this sense, participated state of an essence wherever it is not realized in the absolute plenitude of its formal content"[236]. Although this system of participation may involve composition, the limitation proper to "participation by similitude" does not result from the composition itself, but rather from formal inequality[237]. For Geiger, "participation by composition is incapable of explaining the origin of either formal multiplicity or the subject that limits forms, whereas participation by formal hierarchy seems incapable of explaining the composition between matter and form, essence and *esse*, or subject and accident"[238].

Geiger concludes that although St. Thomas adopts both systems of participation, he assigns primacy to the participation by similitude[239]. For Geiger, "participation must consist formally in the relation of likeness and unlikeness between the states of a single form, and that it is not necessarily,

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[234] See L.-B. GEIGER, *La participation dans la philosophie de S. Thomas d'Aquin*, Paris, Vrin 1942. For a helpful summary of Geiger's thought see chapter seven, "L.-B. Geiger, Participation and the Essence of Being", of H. John's *The Thomist Spectrum*, pages 108-122. I will follow John's summary closely in my exposition.

[235] L.-B. GEIGER, *La participation dans la philosophie…*, 27-28.

[236] L.-B. GEIGER, *La participation dans la philosophie…*, 28-29.

[237] See L.-B. GEIGER, *La participation dans la philosophie…*, 29: "The distinction between the two types of participation and the two systems derived from it does not, then, concern the presence or the absence either of composition or of formal hierarchy. It concerns the role in the system which is accorded to composition. If composition *explains* limitation, we have participation by composition. *A fortiori*, this will be the case if composition alone is considered. If limitation is *naturally anterior* to composition, although it may imply the latter, even necessarily, as its consequence, then we are dealing with participation by formal hierarchy".

[238] G. DOOLAN, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas as Exemplar Causes*, 203. See L.-B. GEIGER, *La participation dans la philosophie…*, 301.

[239] L.-B. GEIGER, *La participation dans la philosophie…*, 342-398.

in the eyes of St. Thomas, the *consequence* of a *composition*"[240]. The hierarchy of essences is not explained as a consequence of the composition of essence and existence. Geiger exemplifies this by explaining that although a created *ens* is good primarily and immediately by its existence and reality, its essence is not radically removed from the order of goodness: the essence is the formal principle of good, just as it is the formal principle of being[241]. The limitation of the goodness of the essence is, for Geiger, a datum that is independent of composition; goodness is attributable to the essence *in se* when considered apart from the essence's act of being: "Thus, Geiger establishes once and for all the irreducibility of the two forms of participation which he distinguishes; the formal *hierarchy* which accounts for the limited and diverse goodness of essences is set up as logically independent of *participation by composition*"[242]. For Geiger, the essence is distinct from its *esse*, yet is a *being* in its own right, insofar as it is the formal principle of determination and limitation in the concrete entity. It is limited in itself and this limitation cannot be explained by composition[243]. Based on this Geiger concludes: "We must appeal to participation by formal hierarchy: the essence which participates *in* [*à*] existence is itself a participation of [*de*] the First Perfection, of which it marks out only a limited and fragmentary aspect"[244]. Geiger explains that the essence as potency proceeds from God as a principle of being and is limited directly by Divine Wisdom. Created being thus requires "a limitation of the essence in itself, independent of and prior to any composition whatsoever, and, consequently, to entail the logical priority of participation by formal limitation"[245]. By assigning primacy to participation by similitude, Geiger seeks to avoid an infinite regress of limiting compositions and account for the limitation of the essence, which in turn limits the *esse* it receives.

Fabro's first critique of Geiger's theory is found in a 1946 article on participation[246]. In it, Fabro limits himself to pointing out Geiger's rejection

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[240] L.-B. GEIGER, *La participation dans la philosophie…*, 52.

[241] See L.-B. GEIGER, *La participation dans la philosophie…*, 60.

[242] H. JOHN, *The Thomist Spectrum*, 115.

[243] See H. JOHN, *The Thomist Spectrum*, 115.

[244] L.-B. GEIGER, *La participation dans la philosophie…*, 60, n. 3.

[245] H. JOHN, *The Thomist Spectrum*, 116.

[246] C. FABRO, "La metafisica tomista della partecipazione come sintesi di classicismo e cristianesimo", in *Filosofia e Cristianesimo* (Atti del II convegno Italiano di studi filosofici Cristiani, 4-6 Settembre 1946), Marzorati, Milano 1947, 183-184.

of predicamental participation, the lack of a study of St. Thomas's sources, and the exclusively *philosophical* treatment of participation. In 1950, Fabro added several pages to *NMP*'s Introduction in which he argues that by giving priority to participation by similitude over participation by composition, Geiger unwittingly endangers the Thomistic doctrine of the real distinction. St. Thomas's texts, Fabro argues, show that participation involves both similitude and composition. Taking similitude alone leads to a position of formal identity and immanence (like that of Platonism and Averroism). Geiger's argument is that if one does not admit a limitation without a corresponding real composition, then one falls into an infinite regress in the series of limiting subjects (unless an eternal, uncreated principle like matter is posited). Fabro dismisses this argument as follows:

> Frankly, this fear appears exaggerated to me, since the Thomistic position on this point is of a marvelous completeness and coherence: as the predicamental formalities are limited in the individuals by way of matter, so the transcendental formalities – and *esse* before all of them – are limited by the essences that come to be actuated. Essence remains that which is, limited in itself in its ontological degree of being: it is not the essence that is limited in its composition with *esse* – since it is already as a degree of perfection –, but *esse* itself which is limited and with *esse*, so is *ens*. Therefore not every form as such and insofar as it is form is limited and composed, although every limited *ens* should be composed in the order precisely in which it is presented as limited. It is not surprising, then, that Fr. Geiger is not favorable toward my defense of "predicamental participation" […]: but if one admits – as one should admit, if one does not want to fall into nominalistic and suarezian extrinsicism – that every multiplication is not a simple empirical *fact*, but involves a metaphysical situation, and therefore that the multiplication – even univocal – involves real limitation and composition[247].

In *PC*, Fabro once again critiques Geiger's position and observes that Geiger's proposal raises serious doubts about the Thomistic principle that states that "an act is only limited in its order by a corresponding potency" and that "act is not self-limiting". St. Thomas's texts on participation and "likeness", he holds, do not seem to indicate two different systems of participation but rather a correspondence between similarity and composition. Participation *par similitude* is always found in conjunction with and never independent from participation *par composition*. In short,

[247] C. FABRO, *NMP*, 28-29.

limitation is had by means of real composition[248]. On a theoretical level, Fabro argues, Geiger's position seems to lead to understanding the Thomistic composition of essence and *esse* as if it were the result of the union of "*duae res*" by means of an efficient cause. Fabro holds that the essence of metaphysical participation always involves two things: "the causal dependence of the participant on the participated (dynamic participation) and composition of the participant with respect to the participated (static participation) which is such *per essentiam* and therefore subsistent perfection"[249]. The Thomistic doctrine of *similitudo participata* is indicated by and given a foundation by means of composition.

As we saw earlier in Chapter Four, Fabro deals several times in *PC* with creation and the derivation of the creature's essence and *esse*. It should be noted, however, that *PC* does not deal with efficient, exemplary and final causality (at the transcendental level) in a systematic fashion. In fact, almost no mention is made of final causality and the bulk of the work on causality deals with the causality proper to the form: namely, the manner in which the form is said to receive, limit, determine and give *esse*. One of Fabro's main goals in *PC* is to explain the interplay between predicamental and transcendental causality in the creature. With regard to transcendental causality and the created essence, Fabro is content to point out that the derivation of the created essence occurs, from a formal point of view, through the intermediary of the divine ideas and according to a relationship of exemplarity. From the point of view of its reality, however, the created essence is created as potency: its actuality is mediated by its *esse*, that is to say, through its participation in *actus essendi*[250]. In his commentaries on St. Thomas's texts and thought on creation, Fabro employs and expounds on St. Thomas's distinction between the similitude of the creature to God's

[248] See *In I Sent*., d. 48, q. 1, a. 1.

[249] C. FABRO, *PC*, 56-57.

[250] C. FABRO, *PC*, 643: "Created essences are derived from the divine essence, through the intermediary of the divine Ideas, and therefore formally the derivation is according to the relation of exemplarity. Every essence, then, although it is act in the formal order, is created as potency that is actuated by participated *esse* which *in se* it receives: its actuality is 'mediated', therefore, by *esse*". See also *PC*, 595: "According to the twofold transcendental participation, both with regard to the essence and to *esse*, there is also a twofold moment of analogy; one formal by imitation of the divine form, and another that is real by derivation of divine causality".

intellect by imitation of the divine idea and the similitude of the creature to God's nature by participation in *esse*[251].

In a 1961 article – which complements and completes some of the results of *NMP* and *PC* – Fabro develops the theme of the "principle of the limitation of act". In brief, the article argues that, for St. Thomas, although the form is not limited *by* itself, it can and should be said to be limited *in* itself, even at the formal level. Throughout the article, Fabro calls attention to the importance of predicamental participation and, in particular, the participation of the species in a genus. This is because the form can be said to be limited *in itself* since it does not realize the entire virtual perfection of the genus to which it belongs[252].

Shortly after the publication of *PC*, J. M. Artola published his doctoral dissertation on *Creación y participación. La participación de la naturaleza divina en las criaturas según la filosofía de Santo Tomás de Aquino* (1963)[253]. Artola's dissertation deals with the creature's participation in the divine nature according to efficient, exemplary and final causality. It is worthwhile to consider Artola's work at length because Fabro did not investigate exemplary and final causality to the degree that Artola did and because there is a strong affinity between the thought of Fabro and Artola on *esse*.

Artola considers the creature's participation in the divine nature according to efficient causality in Chapter Three of his work. God, he writes, is the "*causa essendi*" of creatures: the effects that proceed from divine causality receive their existence (*esse*) from God; within this *esse*, all other formal perfection is included[254]. What the creature receives and

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[251] See *De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 4 ad 9; *ibid.*, q. 7, a. 7 ad 6.

[252] See C. FABRO, "La determinazione dell'atto…", *ET*, 335-338. Fabro argues that spiritual essences are not limited *by* themselves—for the pure form possesses all the perfection proper to its species—but are limited *in* themselves to the degree that they express only a particular degree of perfection and act with respect to the formal *totality* of their genus.

[253] J. M. ARTOLA, *Creación y participación. La participación de la naturaleza divina en las criaturas según la filosofía de santo Tomás de Aquino*, Publicaciones de la Institución Aquinas, Madrid 1963. Artola notes in a footnote to the introduction that the dissertation was defended on February 14, 1961 and does not take into account works published in the meantime. I assume he is referring in particular to Cornelio Fabro's *Partecipazione e causalità*.

[254] See J. M. ARTOLA, *Creación y participación*, 84. Further on, Artola writes: "Creation and participation are two concepts which express a common reality from different points of view. Everything that the creature has is something

participates in is not God himself, but rather a "reality" that comes from God. God produces his effects by communicating something that is his, yet, nevertheless, is not himself[255]. The dependence of the creature on the Creator is translated, ontologically, into a relation[256].

In Chapter Four, Artola deals with the way in which creatures participate in the divine nature by means of exemplary causality and, therefore, with the relationship between the exemplar cause (the divine idea or divine exemplar) and its effect[257]. As an *extrinsic* formal cause, the exemplar cause cannot be said to give being (*esse*) in the same way that the intrinsic formal cause gives being. Rather, between the exemplar idea and the exemplified reality, there is "a certain convenience in a form" since the effect is an imitation of the exemplar[258]. In intellectual agents, the exemplar prescribes the form which the action of the agent intends to introduce in the effect. In his investigation of what the exemplar cause communicates to the effect, Artola notes that we frequently find passages in St. Thomas's work which hold that the exemplified reality participates in a likeness of the exemplar[259]. "Likeness" implies a communication in the form (I, q. 4, a. 3) and the varying degrees of this communication give rise to different degrees of likeness (specific, generic or analogical). Here, Artola introduces the distinction between the exemplar idea[260] and the reality to which the idea refers[261]. Properly speaking, the exemplar cause refers to the former, to the exemplar idea, and to the imitation produced in the effect. In this way, the exemplar idea is the rule and measure of the beings produced in its imitation[262]. The divine nature is the exemplar of all creatures insofar as there is an analogical, imperfect likeness between God's nature and

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received from the creating cause. However, in this reception what is received is something that pertains to the Creator. Setting aside a monist solution, one needs to explain this pertaining by means of an imperfect formal assimilation of the creature to the Creator and, consequently, by means of an existential dependence".

[255] See J. M. ARTOLA, *Creación y participación*, 94-95.

[256] See J. M. ARTOLA, *Creación y participación*, 95-97. Artola argues that this relation is not a predicamental accident.

[257] See J. M. ARTOLA, *Creación y participación*, 99-126.

[258] See J. M. ARTOLA, *Creación y participación*, 107.

[259] See J. M. ARTOLA, *Creación y participación*, 108. Artola mentions I, q. 6, a. 4; I, q. 9, a. 1; *De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 4 ad 9; *Ibid.,* q. 3, a. 16 ad 14 (here, Artola has ad 15).

[260] See *De Veritate*, q. 3, a. 1.

[261] See *Quodlibet*. IV, q. 1, *De Potentia*, q. 7, a. 7 ad 6.

[262] See J. M. ARTOLA, *Creación y participación*, 109.

creatures and insofar as the divine essence is participable in different ways by every creature[263].

Towards the conclusion of the chapter on exemplar causality, Artola states that the creature's participation in the divine nature implies both the creature's "imitation" of the divine essence and the creature's "adequation" to the idea of the divine intellect. From the perspective of the creature there is a twofold participation: participation in the species (such as "horse") and participation in the absolute perfections (such as "life"). In correlating the aspects of imitation of the divine essence and adequation to the divine idea with the creature's twofold participation, Artola notes that it is important to keep in mind the following text from St. Thomas: "The form of horse and the form of life are not in God in the same way; for the form of horse is not in God unless it be as a *ratio intellecta*; however, the *ratio* of life is in God not so much as understood (*intellecta*), but also as stable (*fermata*) in the nature of the thing"[264]. Here Artola cautions that we should not posit a twofold participation for exemplary causality, but rather one participation:

> Nevertheless, one should not deduce from this ultimate twofold consideration of the creature a twofold participation, placing it in correlation with the twofold aspect of the divine essence and intellect. We are dealing with aspects, not separate processes. The synthesis and complementarity of aspects is given to us by St. Thomas in the following words: "But every creature has its own proper *species*, according to which it participates *in some way* in a likeness of the divine essence" (I, q. 15, a. 2)[265]. Comparing this text to the former, we see that the species – the "forma equi" – is in God as "ratio intellecta" yet should ultimately be deduced from the divine essence as its likeness, even if it is a very remote likeness. There can be nothing in the divine intellect which does not proceed from the very essence of God. The "forma equi" is nothing but a particular form of life whose "ratio" is formally in the divine essence as the text itself states. Thus, there is no place for positing the existence of a twofold participation by way of exemplar causality. The one, unique participation may be considered from the point of view of the absolute perfection from which it proceeds or from the degree or mode in which the absolute perfection is

[263] See J. M. ARTOLA, *Creación y participación*, 117.

[264] See *In I Sent.*, d. 36, q. 2, a. 2 ad 2: "Non enim eodem modo est in Deo forma equi et vita; quia forma equi non est in Deo nisi sicut ratio intellecta; sed ratio vitae in Deo est non tantum sicut intellecta, sed etiam sicut in natura rei firmata".

[265] "Unaquaeque autem creatura habet propriam speciem, secundum quod aliquo modo participat divinae essentiae similitudinem".

> determined. This determination of the absolute perfection to the limits of a species is immediately regulated by the idea of the divine intellect[266].

According to Artola's theory, then, we do not have a twofold participation in God's exemplar and his nature:

Creature	Participation in a species: "horse"	→	participation in divine idea
	Participation in a perfection: "*esse*"	→	participation in divine nature

But rather a twofold participation in the creature and a twofold exemplarity that refers to one participation in the divine nature:

Creature	Participation in a species: "horse"	→	adequation to a divine idea	Participation in the divine nature
	Participation in a perfection: "*esse*" (according to the measure of the specific form)	→	imitation of divine essence	

Thus, while Fabro's texts concentrated on the *derivation* of the creature from God, Artola's exposition looks at the problem from the angle of the creature and its participation in the divine nature. With regard to the procession of creatures from God, Artola notes that the communication of being is accomplished by means of assimilation. The likeness of the creature to God refers to the divine essence insofar as the divine intellect knows its essence as imitable in different ways by creatures. The source and foundation of the plurality and limitation of creatures in the order of efficient and exemplary causality is found in the divine intellect.

In Chapter Five, Artola considers Geiger's division of participation and takes a slightly critical stance towards Geiger's proposal, pointing out that by assigning "participation by similitude" to the participation between God and creatures and "participation by composition" to the created order, Geiger detaches participation in the divine nature from *esse*, and is left with

[266] J. M. ARTOLA, *Creación y participación*, 122-123.

a formal assimilation (through the essence) to divine being alone[267]. Geiger also errors in equating the participation by composition of essence and *esse* with that between matter and form[268]. In contrast to Geiger's proposal, Artola argues that creatures participate in *esse* in a limited way, in conformity to the measure of their species which is given by the form. In turn, the form is ordered to the perfection of existence. In participation, there is not just a relationship of *causal dependence* with respect to the first act, but rather also a *formal assimilation*. Both elements – causal dependence and formal assimilation – are integrated within Thomistic participation and both combine in the composition proper to *ens per participationem*. In creation, the limiting reception of *esse* is properly a participation, yet *esse*, in turn, is the foundation of the assimilation of the creature: *esse* is the bond which unites the creature, through assimilation and causal dependence, to the First Act. Assimilation and causal dependence are the two characteristics of participation when understood as a relation to an extrinsic principle[269]. At the same time, created substances are and are good not just due to an extrinsic relationship of causal dependence but also *in se* due to their intrinsic participation in and possession of *actus essendi*.

In Chapter Six, Artola concludes that, for Aquinas, *esse* is not just that by which the essential perfections become real with existential reality, but rather that the perfections owe to *esse* the very reason of their perfection[270]. The essence collaborates in the constitution of the perfection of things as the receiving subject of created *esse* and as the principle that determines and measures the degree of perfection of the thing. In this way, participation in the divine nature is effected by means of the synthesis of essence and existence. This synthesis is not the accumulation of two genera of partial perfections, but rather the synthesis of two constitutive principles of the same perfection[271].

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[267] See J. M. ARTOLA, *Creación y participación*, 130-131.

[268] See J. M. ARTOLA, *Creación y participación*, 133: "Con esto resulta patente que no se puede simplificar, come hace Geiger, la doctrina de la participación por composición ligándola a una concepción que parece no ver otro género de principios receptores que los puramente materiales. Quien lea la recensión de textos tomistas presentada por Fabro—y que no reproducimos para no alargarnos excesivamente—advertirá con toda claridad que para Santo Tomás la participación lleva consigo composición".

[269] See J. M. ARTOLA, *Creación y participación*, 133-134.

[270] See J. M. ARTOLA, *Creación y participación*, 165.

[271] See J. M. ARTOLA, *Creación y participación*, 168.

In Chapter Eight, Artola considers the creature's participation in the divine nature according to final causality. The problem of what the creature "receives" from God by the fact that God is its ultimate end embraces both that which comes from God to creatures and the way in which the creature tends to God or possesses him. In answer to the problem, Artola establishes that "participation in the end" means rest or possession of the end: "The possession of the end has a special notion of participation in that the end is not totally communicated to the effect. It is communicated partially and from this arises the notion of participation"[272]. As infinite goodness, God is the ultimate end of all things; all things proceeds from him and from him receive their order to the end. The effect of the final cause is the very motion or tendency of the things to the end and this motion as ordered to the end is the proper effect of the ultimate end. As well, the execution of the government of the universe is realized by God through and by means creatures. Creatures participate in divine providence to the degree in which they cooperate in the execution of the order determined by the divine intellect (See I, q. 22, a. 3). In this way, created causality is also subject to the law of the participation of the creature in the perfection of the creator and conserver of the created order. This participation is realized by means of the reception of a participated power of the first cause in the created agent[273].

To conclude, Artola has the merit of dealing with separately and successively with the problems of the creature's participation in the divine nature according to efficient causality, exemplary causality and final causality. In his investigation of creation and participation, he looks at the problem from the creature's perspective and how the creature's participation in a species and in *esse* is connected to an adequation to a divine idea and imitation of the divine essence. This connection does not imply two participations (as it does in Geiger), but rather there is only one, unique participation in the divine nature that can be considered from different angles and according to the three extrinsic causalities. Participation in the divine nature according to efficient causality refers to the creature's reception of *esse* from God; participation in the divine nature according to exemplary causality refers creature's imitation of the divine essence and adequation to an idea of the divine intellect; participation in the divine nature according to final causality refers to the motion or tendency of things to the ultimate end or to the effect's ultimate, partial possession of and final

[272] J. M. ARTOLA, *Creación y participación*, 214.
[273] See J. M. ARTOLA, *Creación y participación*, 219.

rest in the end. One possible drawback to Artola's exposition is that he does not respond directly to the problem of the limitation of the form-essence or the role of the exemplar cause in the limitation of the created form-essence.

Continuing our overview, Fabro, in a 1967 article which summarizes his interpretation of Thomistic participation, reiterates his critique of Geiger's division of participation: "To assert, as has been done (Geiger), that Thomas holds as distinct participation by similitude (*secundum similitudinem*) and participation by composition (*secundum compositionem*), is to break the Thomistic synthesis at its center, which is the assimilation and mutual subordination of the couplets of act-potency and *participatum-participans* in the emergence of the new concept of *esse*"[274]. At the same time, Fabro added a paragraph about the way in which a "participation by similitude" may be affirmed in created *ens*. He writes: "To the extent that participation allows one to conceive the created universe in the complexity of its natures as a reflection of divine ideas or exemplars, one may speak of participation by similitude (*per similitudinem*) in the transcendental order according to a relation of dependence of the finite on the Infinite"[275]. Once again, for Fabro, the similitude of creation to the divine ideas or the divine nature is due to the participation of the creature in *actus essendi* and the creature's dependence on God as efficient, exemplary and final cause of all things.

In a 1984 article entitled, "Thomas Aquinas and Participation", John Wippel attempted a synthesis of the theories of Geiger and Fabro[276]. After explaining what Aquinas means by participation in general and by participation of beings in *esse* and what *esse* creatures participate in, Wippel seeks to establish whether the limited character of finite beings is due to participation by composition (Fabro) or to participation by similitude (Geiger). Wippel concedes to Fabro that composition is necessary to account for the limitation of *esse* within a given entity[277]. Geiger, he writes, has no need to fear that appeal to participation by composition might lead to the positing of a pre-existing subject or essence, independent of God awaiting for *esse* to be created and poured into it. With regard to the essence

[274] C. FABRO, "Elementi per una dottrina tomista della partecipazione", *ET*, 435; English translation: "The Intensive Hermeneutics…", 469.

[275] C. FABRO, "Elementi per una dottrina tomista della partecipazione", *ET*, 440; "The Intensive Hermeneutics…", 476.

[276] See J. WIPPEL, "Thomas Aquinas and Participation", in *Idem.* (ed.), *Studies in Medieval Philosophy*, CUA Press, Washington DC 1984, 117-158.

[277] J. WIPPEL, "Thomas Aquinas and Participation", 156.

principle of a creature, a metaphysical explanation of the limitation proper to the essence is necessary. Here, Wippel agrees with Geiger:

> If a given being has this essence principle rather than any other, this is because its essence imitates its appropriate divine idea and depends upon it as upon its formal exemplar cause. A divine idea is nothing but a given way in which God understands himself as capable of being imitated by a creature. Hence the essence of any creature is an expression of a particular way in which the divine idea can be imitated and in fact is imitated. At this point it seems that participation by composition goes hand in hand with causal dependency, not only in the order of efficient causality but also in the order of formal or exemplary causality. In other words, participation by composition, as it is expressed in the intrinsic structure of any created entity, receives its final explanation in the order of extrinsic causality by leading one to recognize God not only as the efficient cause but as the formal or exemplar cause of every participant. And this it seems to me, is to bring in the element of participation by assimilation or formal hierarchy, as Geiger would have it. In sum, both composition and assimilation or imitation are involved in Thomas's explanation of the participated structure of creatures[278].

Wippel concludes by giving priority to participation by composition in the order of discovery, yet noting that participation by assimilation or formal hierarchy is first in the order of nature and is discovered only after demonstrating God's existence and in the context of appealing to God as the formal exemplar cause and efficient cause of all finite being[279].

J. Aertsen's *Nature and Creature* (1988) also proposes a twofold participation in agreement with the twofold reduction he outlines according to "truth" and "being". He writes:

> [T]he reduction of *ens* goes beyond the horizon of the "whatness", or nature of that which is, to the *esse* of creaturely being, while the reduction of "the true" establishes the natural determination in an exemplary manner in the divine intellect. In connection with these reductions, the analysis of "that which is" and the analysis of "that which is true" proceed via two different forms of participation[280]. The first concerns the actuality (*esse*) of that which is; the second concerns the being "what," the formality (essence). The first is marked by an inner multiplicity, the composition of subject (*essentia*) and 'esse'. This composition entails as a consequence that being is limited. The second is

[278] J. WIPPEL, "Thomas Aquinas and Participation", 156-157.
[279] See J. WIPPEL, "Thomas Aquinas and Participation", 157-158.
[280] L.-B. GEIGER, *La participation…*, 26-29.

> marked by a formal diversity; the limitation is original. The first is reducible to an efficient causality, the second to an exemplary causality. In the first there is an equality in the datum of being (*per participationem*), in the second a hierarchical order of grades and modes[281].

Aertsen then expounds Fabro's theory that the participation by composition is primary. He also notes that "Characteristic of Fabro's solution of this problem of composition [between essence and *esse*] is the double recourse to God. Both – 'essentia' and 'esse' – come forth from the causality of God"[282]. Aertsen concludes his summary of Fabro's theory, by pointing out Fabro's use of the terms "double creation" and "distinct creation" and by questioning their fidelity to St. Thomas's writings[283]. After considering the theories of Kremer, Weier and Geiger, Aertsen concludes as follows: "[T]he divergent interpretations have a certain basis of justification, insofar as they are founded either on the reduction to the *Esse* or on the reduction to the *Essentia*. Both interpretations are possible since Thomas himself did not thematize the relation between the two forms of participation"[284].

Tomas Tyn's *Metafisica della sostanza: partecipatione e analogia entis* (1991) proposes a synthesis of Geiger's and Fabro's respective theories of participation[285]. He holds that the two theories are not opposed to one another and that the dispute between the two is more about terminology than content[286]. Tyn adopts Geiger's division of participation and extends it to the division of the analogy of being, giving priority to participation by similitude and the analogy of attribution over participation by composition and the analogy of proportionality[287]. He writes: "In created *ens* one verifies an intersection of two causal (and participative) lines which correspond to the double foundational dimension of finite *ens*, namely to essence and to

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[281] J. A. AERTSEN, *Nature and Creature*, 184-185.

[282] J. AERTSEN, *Nature and Creature*, 185.

[283] See J. AERTSEN, *Nature and Creature*, 136-140 and 185-186. The Thomistic texts that Aertsen refers to are *De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 5 ad 2 and *Ibid*., q. 3, a. 1 ad 17.

[284] J. AERTSEN, *Nature and Creature*, 187.

[285] See T. TYN, *Metafisica della sostanza*, 813-835.

[286] See T. TYN, *Metafisica della sostanza*, 825: "Se è vero che limitazione formale e composizione costituiscono due tipi realmente diversi di partecipazione (e qui ha ragione il Geiger), è anche vero che entrambi sono inseparabilmente uniti nella partecipazione/analogia dell'ente (e questa è la buona ragione su cui si fonda il Fabro)".

[287] See T. TYN, *Metafisica della sostanza*, 899.

being, and which constitute an intersection analogy of two types of analogy – that of attribution analogy (essential, formally hierarchical) with proportional analogy (existential, composition of potency with act)"[288]. Tyn's conclusion on participation, analogy and the production of the creature, composed of essence and *esse* is the following:

> Both the created essence and being derive entirely from the First Cause of every *ens*, but in diverse lines of causality (formal-exemplar, efficient-final) and, consequently according to two types of participation: one, the fundament of attribution, which relates the finite essences to the Essence identical to *ipsum esse*; the other, on the basis of proportionality, which diffuses the act of being to the subsistent essences (substances) making them emerge from nothing. The first is of a formally limiting nature (formal hierarchy), the other, on the contrary, is of a clearly compositive type (actuation of a potential substrate). Thus, being is related to its Cause by means of the essence in which it is inserted and the essence is related to its supreme Exemplar by means of the being which is participates in. In both cases, the relationship is mediated and thus, accidental-predicamental[289].

In essence, like Geiger, Tyn seeks to account for the limitation of the essence by means of a participation by similitude, which has priority over participation by composition. Unlike Fabro, who links composition and dependence with analogy of attribution and similitude with analogy of proportionality, Tyn prefers to connect similitude to attribution and composition to proportionality.

In the 1990s we find two authors who critique both Fabro and Geiger and offer alternative participation theories: Rudi te Velde and Javier Pérez Guerrero. In *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas* (1995), te Velde argues strongly against the need to distinguish different kinds of participation in Aquinas's account of creation[290]. For te Velde, positing two participations would break the unity of the creative act. Consequently, te Velde feels the need to reinterpret the principle *forma dat esse* and "overcome" Fabro's distinction-separation of the predicamental causality of form from God's transcendental causality.

In the Introduction to Part Two of his work, te Velde summarizes the positions of Geiger and Fabro and the synthesis attempted by Wippel. Te Velde holds that Fabro seems little aware of the problem posed by the

[288] T. TYN, *Metafisica della sostanza*, 923.
[289] T. TYN, *Metafisica della sostanza*, 924.
[290] See R. TE VELDE, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas*, x.

limitedness of the receiving essence[291]. He notes that all three authors "feel compelled, in some way or another, to assume a double participation, one according to which the essence has actual being, and another which accounts for the formal determination of the created essence in itself as a partial likeness of the divine essence"[292]. He concludes that the assumption of a double participation does not really solve the problem of the "metaphysical other" and instead such an assumption denies the unity of the act of creation. Against Geiger, te Velde maintains that "the multiplied similitude in creatures does not reside in the formal order of essences as such; the structure of the similitude is such that it includes a negation with regard to the identity of essence and *esse* in God and in this way it is internally characterized by the composition which defines each creature as effect of God"[293].

In Chapter Eight, te Velde argues that Fabro's position tends to reduce the two distinct principles to a prior distinctness in God; this results in Fabro speaking of a double creation. Fabro's position leads te Velde to question one of the principles defended by Fabro, namely, the principle that states

[291] See R. TE VELDE, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas*, 89: "Composition plays a more prominent part in the interpretation of Fabro. According to him, it is the real distinction between essence and *esse* which primarily explains the plurality and diversity of beings. He calls the participation owing to which a plurality of finite beings proceeds from the infinite *esse per essentiam* of God the 'transcendental participation'. Transcendental participation is based on the real composition in creatures between essence and the act of *esse*. Through a primordial distinction (Fabro calls it a *Diremption*) of what is one and the same in God each creature is constituted as a being by participation, in which the full perfection of being is received and limited by a really distinct essence. It remains unclear to what extent this limitation by composition already presupposes the limitedness of the receiving essence. Fabro seems little aware of the problem which this involves. Being a certain degree of perfection, says Fabro, the essence is already limited in itself, and limits by itself the act of being which it receives by creation. Although act in the formal order, the essence is created as potency to be actualized by the participated *esse*. Here, in all clarity, the problem of the 'metaphysical other' comes to the fore. It seems as if the essence must already be limited in itself in order to limit the act of being which it receives. So the essence is created as potency and subsequently endowed with actuality. But what is the sense of a double limitation, and accordingly a double origin of a created being in God? The real issue is avoided here".

[292] R. TE VELDE, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas*, 90.

[293] R. TE VELDE, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas*, 95.

that "*actus non limitatur nisi per potentiam propriam*"[294]. In Chapter Eleven, te Velde reinterprets the principle "*forma dat esse*" and disapproves of Fabro's theory that form gives "formal being" and not "actual existence" to the substance. He summarizes Fabro's position as follows: "Form, according to Fabro, constitutes the essence in its formal act and determination, and completes the essence as the receptive potency with regard to the *actus essendi*. The causality of form is thus restricted to the formal order; it makes a thing be *what* it is, but does not pertain to the act of *esse* by which a thing is an actual being"[295]. In contrast, te Velde holds that St. Thomas affirms that form gives actual determinate being to matter, that form gives the species and being[296]. According to te Velde, "There is no hint that form only constitutes the substance in its specific content so that it subsequently can receive the act of being. Form is act and hence it makes a thing to be in act"[297]. Te Velde concludes:

> The consequence of Fabro's view is a fatal separation between the categorical causality of form and the transcendental causality with respect to being as such. If the many forms are somehow presupposed as the diversifying recipients of the flow of being, then it will be no long intelligible that the forms and essences of thing proceed from the same source as their very being. If the forms of things are thought to be prior to the common influx of being, then they must be reduced to God separately from the common effect of being. This "double" creation is exactly what Fabro proposes: he argues that each creature in respect of its form and essence must have a "dérivation propre" in God. If the act of being is beyond the causal range of form and therefore the exclusive effect of creation, the formal limitation which the form imposes on being needs to be explained by a distinct derivation in God. Fabro's strong emphasis on the "real" distinction as well as his view that form only compares to being as limiting potency ultimate leaves the unity of God's act of creation unexplained[298].

Te Velde notes further on that the real issue in Fabro's interpretation is the nature of the potentiality which must be present in things. While Fabro

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[294] R. TE VELDE, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas*, 151.

[295] R. TE VELDE, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas*, 221-222.

[296] See *De substantiis separatis*, ch. 8: "Quia igitur materia recipit esse determinatum actuale per formam..."; *De anima*, q. un., a. 10: "forma dat esse et speciem".

[297] R. TE VELDE, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas*, 222.

[298] R. TE VELDE, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas*, 223.

stresses the negative character of form in relation to the act of being, he also holds that form, as the act of essence, is something positive. His final judgment is that "Fabro's view of the relationship between form as the act of essence and as the receiving principle of *esse* remains unclear and confusing"[299].

In response to te Velde's position, I note that in a 1998 article J. Wippel defends at length the Thomistic axiom that "unreceived act is unlimited". In the article, Wippel notes that te Velde "denies that according to Thomas the act of being (*esse*) is limited by a receiving principle"[300]. After a survey of several of St. Thomas's texts on the principle, Wippel concludes – in contrast to te Velde's position – that: "Aquinas did accept and use the principle that unreceived act is unlimited and that, where one finds limited instances of act, one must account for this by appealing to a principle that receives and limits it"[301]. Wippel concludes his article drawing attention to Fabro's work on the notion of intensive *esse*: "Simply considered in itself, *esse* includes nothing but actuality and perfection, the total power of being. It is actually so realized in that unique case where it subsists apart from any receiving subject, that is, in God. In every other case it is received by a subject that simultaneously limits it, thereby preventing it from being realized in its unlimited fullness"[302]. Appealing exclusively to an extrinsic cause to account for the limitation of act is insufficient: "[St. Thomas] is convinced that a distinct intrinsic limiting principle is also

[299] R. TE VELDE, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas*, 225. There is an important distinction that appears to be missing in te Velde's interpretation of Fabro: namely, Fabro's distinction between *esse in actu* and *esse ut actus*. As we have seen, this distinction is important in the interpretation of St. Thomas's texts on *esse* and could account for one of the texts that te Velde quotes in order to critique Fabro's theory: *De substantiis separatis*, ch. 8: "Matter receives *actual determinate esse* through the form". For Fabro, form does not produce *actus essendi*, yet may be said to give *esse-in-actu* to matter. See A. CONTAT, Le figure della differenza ontologica…", 240: "In realtà 'l'effetto della forma' al quale si allude è l'essere in atto dell'ente (*esse in actu*), ossia il suo fatto di essere; ma non può essere il suo essere in quanto atto (*esse ut actus*), cioè l'atto di essere propriamente detto. La mediazione della forma legittima pienamente questa distinzione proposta da Cornelio Fabro: attuata dall'atto di essere, la forma o essenza sostanziale lo trasmette all'ente secondo l'intensità che gli ha fissato, ed in questo senso l'essere attuale di tale ente proviene pure dalla sua forma specifica".

[300] J. WIPPEL, "Thomas Aquinas and the Axiom…", 535.

[301] J. WIPPEL, "Thomas Aquinas and the Axiom…", 556.

[302] J. WIPPEL, "Thomas Aquinas and the Axiom…", 564.

required, in order to account for the limitation of that which is not self-limiting"[303]. In *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (2000), J. Wippel once again takes into account te Velde's work, but notes that te Velde mistakenly understands the limiting role of form. In no way, Wippel argues, does a created essence (temporally) pre-exist its *esse*:

> It seems to me, however, that both Geiger and te Velde have failed to see that here Thomas is applying in an appropriately adapted way the adage that causes can be causes of one another simultaneously according to different causal lines, or in this case, that principles can be mutually dependent on one another according to different lines of dependency, and that priority in the order of nature does not necessarily imply priority in the order of time. Thus, while the act of being actualizes the corresponding essence principle of a given entity and makes that entity actually exist, simultaneously the essence principle receives and limits the act of being. Neither pre-exists as such apart from the other, and each enjoys its appropriate priority in the order of nature (not in the order of time) with respect to its particular ontological function within a given entity[304].

In his book, *La creación como asimilación a Dios* (1996), J. Pérez Guerrero criticizes at length, both directly and indirectly, Fabro's position and the "principle of separated perfection" or separated *esse*. Pérez asserts that Fabro's principle inevitably leads one to conceive the "separated perfection" (divine perfection) and the "participated perfection" (created perfection) as the very same perfection merely found in two different states (like water found in two different physical states of ice and steam)[305]. To represent this point, Pérez quotes a text from *PC* in which Fabro argues that the pure perfection represents the metaphysical point of encounter between

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[303] J. WIPPEL, "Thomas Aquinas and the Axiom…", 564.

[304] J. WIPPEL, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 129-130. "To this I would add, in order to forestall any possible misunderstanding, that this is not to imply that the creaturely essence enjoys any actual reality in itself apart from the divine essence prior to its actual creation in an existing entity together with its corresponding act of being. The actual creation of any such an entity, including both its essence and its act of being, also requires the simultaneous exercise of divine efficient causality" (p. 131).

[305] See J. PÉREZ GUERRERO, *La creación como asimilación a Dios. Un estudio desde Tomás de Aquino*, EUNSA, Pamplona 1996, 33: "The idea of separated being supposes the idea of a perfection common to God and the creature: of a perfection that in God is found in a separated mode and in the creature in an inherent way".

the creature and the Creator according to a "community" of pertaining ("*comunità" di appartenenza*) since the creature's perfection is an effect of divine causality. The analogy in play is that of "intrinsic proportion" since: "The pure perfections and *esse* are truly immanent in creatures 'as inherent forms' and not only in God and because God himself as founding First Principle is intrinsic to the creature with his causality"[306]. Pérez argues against Fabro's conception that in neither way – *esse* as an "inherent form" in the creature or God as intrinsic to the creature as agent cause – can a "community" be considered between God and the creature. The first way supposes that the perfection is anterior to God; the second would make God an inherent form in the creature[307].

Further on, Pérez considers the problem of participation by composition and participation by similitude and the discussion on participation between Fabro and Geiger. Against Fabro, Pérez does not accept the principle of separated perfection and, therefore, distances himself from Fabro's position. Against Geiger, he writes that although Geiger does not reduce similitude to a mere consequence of composition, Geiger interprets assimilation and imitation in a very superficial way, forgetting the "active dimension" and fundamental meaning of participation by similitude[308]. According to Pérez, participation by similitude does not reduce to participation by composition, for the likeness of the creature to God should not be considered as a result of a composition, but rather the result of an "act of assimilation"[309]. He argues that: "Divine being is communicated to the creature only by way of imitation or assimilation, in such a way that the created perfections are certain likenesses of God or divine likenesses"[310]. Pérez argues, against Fabro, that participation understood as a partial communication or limitation does not explain the

[306] C. FABRO, *PC*, 523.

[307] J. PÉREZ GUERRERO, *La creación como asimilación a Dios*, 34: "If the pure perfection is identified with God, then it is not, in any way, a perfection that the creature participates in as an inherent form, namely, by composition; if it is not identified with God, the pure perfection possesses merely a logical unity or is, on the contrary, a reality that is superior to God. If we say that the creature does not participate by composition in God precisely because God is the separated perfection and not the common perfection that can be composed or separated, then we have to affirm that such a perfection is something merely conceptual".

[308] See J. PÉREZ GUERRERO, *La creación como asimilación a Dios*, 68, n. 126.

[309] See J. PÉREZ GUERRERO, *La creación como asimilación a Dios*, 75-76.

[310] J. PÉREZ GUERRERO, *La creación como asimilación a Dios*, 122.

divine likeness in the creature, since the communication itself is based on imitation and likeness[311]. As well, because the communication of divine being to the creature is produced exclusively by likeness, participation by composition does not explain the communication[312]. According to Pérez, the divine likeness is the creature's created form insofar as it is a form received from God. The received or participated form is considered as a likeness to the degree in which the participation is understood as imitation.

In his Conclusion, Pérez argues that those who consider creation as nothing more than participation end up in the confusing position of identifying created and uncreated in the participated[313]. Pérez finds this confusion in the principle of separated perfection and summarizes his critique of "separated *esse*" as follows:

> This confusion is present in the doctrine of separated *esse*, and therefore, we dedicated the beginning of our work to critique this theory. From the point of view of the defenders of the theory of separated *esse*, the being of the creature or participated being is not caused except insofar as being-received-in-this-subject. The caused is not so much being as the composite of being and essence or the receiving subject of being. For this reason, the difference between created being and divine being is ascertained precisely in the composite nature of the former and, for this reason, they identify divine being with separated being: just as the separation of the essence destroys the reason why one considers being as something created, separated being is not distinguished from divine being. On the other hand, the essence is considered as a necessary means in that, upon it falls the task of differentiating created being from divine being. The essence receives being which, only insofar as received in the way of an essence, is created being. Given that, in any case, the doctrine is situated in a metaphysics of being, the posteriority of the essence with respect to the latter should be conceived beforehand as posteriority of the potency with respect to its act. However, if the created essence is potency ordered to created being, the

[311] See J. PÉREZ GUERRERO, *La creación como asimilación a Dios*, 143: "Participation by composition is not what explains, in this way, the existence of the likeness between God and creatures". In his footnote, Pérez sustains that Fabro falls into a vicious circle by founding likeness on participation: "the creature participates in its cause exclusively according to the notion of likeness".

[312] J. PÉREZ GUERRERO, *La creación como asimilación a Dios*, 143-144.

[313] J. PÉREZ GUERRERO, *La creación como asimilación a Dios*, 188-189: Participated being is created being, given that uncreated being is unparticipated; however, at the same time, the participated is that which is participated in and, therefore, must be uncreated: in other words, participation cannot be used to articulate the created and uncreated order.

> essence limits created being: said another way, it debilitates created being, in such a way that this limitation presupposes the created nature of being and is not identified with it[314].

Pérez adds that he is not arguing against the real composition of being and essence in the creature but rather that the Thomistic tradition hasn't been able to articulate the real distinction in a coherent way along with the fundamental idea contained in the notion of creation: being originated by God *ex nihilo*. The traditional position, explains the relationship between creation and the real distinction as a duality of participated perfection and participating subject and understands the participated perfection as transcendentally the same as the imparticipated or divine perfection. For Pérez, this position is inadequate[315].

Pérez concludes that when St. Thomas speaks of participation in divine being, he does not mean that there is a receiving subject that limits a participated form, but rather that participation-in-something should be taken in the sense of assimilation-to-something[316]. In this way, assimilation is fundamental and not merely a corollary. Creatures do "receive" from God, yet we cannot think of this receiving in terms of a duality of recipient-received. Rather, according to Pérez, we are dealing with a pure assimilation as an active reception which does not suppose change in that which receives nor the composition recipient-received[317]. Created perfection is not something received by the creature which is previously found in God; the creature receives from God by assimilating to Him, in such a way that receiving and assimilating coincide. According to Pérez, creation is not understood by St. Thomas as a diffusion of divine perfection, as a descending moment, but rather as an elevation. In the end, created perfection and divine perfection are analogous perfections, in that analogy is something that deals with order: it is the creature that is really ordered to God.

In response to Pérez, four points in Fabro's defence can be made. First, there is a marked tendency, after Wippel's article on participation (1984), to reduce Fabro's theory of participation to "participation by composition". As we have seen, however, in Fabro's interpretation of Thomistic participation, "composition" is just one aspect of transcendental

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[314] J. PÉREZ GUERRERO, *La creación como asimilación a Dios*, 189.
[315] See J. PÉREZ GUERRERO, *La creación como asimilación a Dios*, 190.
[316] See J. PÉREZ GUERRERO, *La creación como asimilación a Dios*, 190.
[317] See J. PÉREZ GUERRERO, *La creación como asimilación a Dios*, 187.

participation. The other aspects are those of causal dependence and similitude. In no way does Fabro affirm that God enters into "composition" with creatures. Instead Fabro emphasizes the presence of God in creatures (*per essentiam* as cause of being, *per praesentiam* by divine art and divine providence, *per potentiam* insofar as all things are subject to his power and governance)[318] and that God is the efficient, exemplary and final cause of the creature's *esse* and not the formal cause. Second, Fabro's principle of separated perfection merely affirms the *uniqueness* of the pure (subsistent) perfection. The principle does not affirm a "univocal community" between God's perfection and the creature's perfection (as Pérez argues), but rather maintains that a perfection is predicated of God and creatures analogically and in accordance with the *triplex via* (*via causalitatis*, *via remotionis*, *via eminentiae*). Thirdly, Fabro's theory, as expounded in *PC*, concentrates on the role of form in the reception and limitation of created *esse*. This role is stated clearly in texts like *De Veritate*, q. 27, a. 1 ad 3: "Esse naturale per creationem Deus facit in nobis nulla causa agente mediante, sed tamen mediante aliqua causa formali: forma enim naturalis principium est esse naturalis". This mediatory, limiting, receiving role of form seems to be absent in Pérez's considerations. Fourthly, Pérez is offering nothing less than a new "paradigm", which, unlike Fabro's theory, places assimilation or likeness at the foundation of the creative act. For Fabro, the creature's "likeness" to God is consequent to dynamic and static participation in *esse* and not as fundamental as the production-communication of *esse* to the creature. In neither case are we dealing with a temporal priority.

On the other hand, Pérez does point out two aspects of Fabro's thought which can be improved upon or clarified better. First, the metaphysical passage from *esse commune* to *Ipsum Esse Subsistens* is often mentioned by Fabro, but is not specified in a detailed manner. Fabro frequently refers to the *principles* involved (for example, to the principle of causality formulated according to the notion of participation or the principle of separated perfection), but did not undertake a lengthy, patient analytical exposition of each step. Therefore, some of the problems Pérez raises, such as how analogy is involved in the case of divine and created perfection, are dealt with only at the level of principles by Fabro and not at a more analytical level. Second, the roles of exemplary causality and final causality

[318] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 470-483. I, q. 8, a. 3: "Sic ergo est in omnibus per potentiam, inquantum omnia eius potestati subduntur. Est per praesentiam in omnibus, inquantum omnia nuda sunt et aperta oculis eius. Est in omnibus per essentiam, inquantum adest omnibus ut causa essendi, sicut dictum est".

and the nature of the creature's imitation of-assimilation to God are only summarily mentioned in Fabro's work. In general, however, Fabro would probably respond to Pérez's theory that participation as exemplarity-imitation-similitude-assimilation is present to a greater degree in St. Thomas's early works and is subordinate to participation as causal dependence and as composition in his more mature works.

Finally, we come to Gregory Doolan, who dedicates Chapter Six of his *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas as Exemplar Causes* (2008) to "Participation and the Divine Exemplars". In it we find one of the most complete summaries of exemplary causality according to St. Thomas and an enlightening explanation of Fabro's interpretation of the derivation of essence and *esse* in the act of creation. Doolan starts by explaining the respective divisions of participation made by Fabro and Geiger and also Wippel's synthesis. Wippel, he notes, introduced an important distinction between speaking about the participation of creatures in *esse commune*, in their own *actus essendi* and in *esse subsistens* (God). According to Wippel, each of the three participations corresponds to the third mode of participation between effect and cause as found in *In De Hebdomadibus*, lect. 2[319]. With respect to participation in *esse subsistens*, St. Thomas commonly adds that such participation is by similitude or imitation[320]. This means that every finite being which has a participated likeness to or similitude of that divine *esse*, has its own intrinsic *actus essendi*, which is efficiently caused in it by God. In his reconciliation of Fabro and Geiger, Wippel adopts and slightly alters Geiger's terminology. Against Geiger and te Velde, Wippel agrees with Fabro that composition is needed to account for the limitation of *esse* in finite beings and that Geiger has an unsatisfactory view of the composition of essence and *esse* (reducing it in a sense to the compositions proper to matter and form or subject and accident). To account for the origin and limitation of the created essence

[319] I am not convinced by Wippel's reduction of participation in *esse* to the third mode. The first mode seems to correspond (analogously) to the creature's participation in *esse commune*, the second to the creature's participation in *actus essendi* (again analogously) and the third to the creature's participation in divine *esse* (analogical cause). S. Brock also has doubts about Wippel's position; see Brock's"Harmonizing Plato and Aristotle on *Esse*: Thomas Aquinas and the *De hebdomadibus*", 486.

[320] See G. DOOLAN, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas…*, 201-207.

principle, however, Wippel agrees with Geiger that there is a participation by similitude or formal hierarchy[321].

After this summary, Doolan addresses the question of whether or not we can say that creatures "participate" in the divine ideas. He recalls that the divine exemplar idea is the likeness of what is both essential and accidental in a thing[322]. With regard to the *actus essendi* of a thing, we need to take into account the two modes of divine exemplarism, namely, that of the divine ideas and that of the divine nature:

> Through the exemplarism of the divine nature, then, the finite being receives its total entity *as* a being, both its essence and its *esse*, for in imitating that exemplar, the finite being imitates the absolute perfection that is being itself (*ipsum esse*). By contrast, through the exemplarism of the divine ideas, the finite being receives only its essence; for in imitating *that* exemplar, the finite being imitates but one limited mode of being (*esse*). Contrary to Geiger's position, then, the distinction between absolute perfection and mode of being *is* an adequate real distinction in creatures. Indeed, this distinction forms the foundation of the very distinction between essence and *esse* in any finite being[323].

Doolan points out that this is, in essence, the position of Fabro, who speaks of the derivation of the created essence and the transcendental perfections of creatures in terms of *Diremtion* and according to two modes of exemplarism[324]. While the two modes of divine exemplarism may be distinguished as regards their *formal content* and *what they exemplify*, neither is the cause of its effect apart from the causality of the other[325].

With these premises, Doolan comes to one of his main arguments: according to St. Thomas, creatures do *not* participate in the divine ideas. Doolan offers three reasons for this conclusion. First, the divine ideas that are exemplars are ideas of individuals. Thus, the essence of each finite being is exemplified by its own divine idea: the idea of Socrates is the exemplar of

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[321] See G. DOOLAN, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas…*, 207-210.

[322] See G. DOOLAN, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas…*, 217.

[323] G. DOOLAN, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas…*, 222.

[324] See G. DOOLAN, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas…*, 222-223.

[325] G. DOOLAN, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas…*, 227-228: "This is because created essence cannot be created without an act of being and because an act of being that is created must be limited by a created essence. Or put in terms of participation, there must be a finite essence that participates in the likeness of the divine nature in order for an act of being to be received".

his essence. However, "if we were to say that Socrates is Socrates by participating in his divine idea, then we would be saying that Socrates is not Socrates in his essence"[326]. In like manner, we should not say that creatures participate in the divine ideas of species and genera. "Just as Socrates is Socrates essentially, so too is he essentially a man and an animal"[327]. In his second argument, Doolan discards the possibility of speaking about participation in the divine ideas either by composition or by similitude: regarding participation by composition, creatures do not enter into composition with the divine essence; regarding participation by similitude, "the similitude of a created essence to its divine idea does not involve a formal hierarchy. For as we have seen, although the divine nature does not have the same formality (*ratio*) as the creatures that it exemplifies, the exemplar forms in the divine *mind* do have the same formality as found in creatures – although not according to the same mode of being (*esse*). Hence, Socrates cannot be more or less similar to the divine idea of Socrates: either he is like it or he is not; either he is Socrates or he is not. In short, he enjoys a perfect likeness to his divine idea"[328]. For his third argument, Doolan points out that St. Thomas himself does not speak about a participation in the divine ideas. Every reference of participation in the context of the divine ideas refers to the creature's participating in a likeness of the divine essence and not in its divine idea.

The divine ideas, Doolan concludes, are not participated in, but rather are the known ways in which the likeness of God's essence can be participated. Only in a secondary sense – insofar as the divine ideas derive from the participability of the divine nature – can we speak of a likeness of a creature to its exemplar idea: "Through his ideas, God intends to create beings that are like his divine nature; but it is only as creatures are like that nature that they are in turn like their ideas"[329]. Because a creature receives an act of being it participates in the divine nature by assimilation. Yet, St. Thomas also states that the creature is like the divine intellect (like its divine idea) since it participates in an act of being[330].

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[326] G. DOOLAN, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas…*, 228.

[327] G. DOOLAN, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas…*, 229.

[328] G. DOOLAN, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas…*, 230.

[329] G. DOOLAN, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas…*, 233.

[330] See G. DOOLAN, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas…*, 233. *De Veritate*, q. 2, a. 5: "Sed similitudo rerum quae est in intellectu divino, est factiva rei; res autem, sive forte sive debile esse participet, hoc non habet nisi a Deo; et secundum hoc similitudo omnis rei in Deo existit quod res illa a Deo esse participat".

As Doolan notes, this conclusion seems to pose a problem: on the one hand, we are affirming that it is a creature's essence, not its *esse*, which stands in likeness to an exemplar idea; on the other, St. Thomas holds that a creature is likened to its divine idea by participating in an act of being. Doolan responds to the problem by looking at the "nature" of essence as a principle of finite being. He brings in Wippel's characterization of essence as "relative non-being"[331] and Fabro's characterization of essence as a "positive-negative"[332] in order to clarify the "relative non-being" of the divine ideas. The limitation found in the created essence is due to the "prior limitation in the divine mind regarding the degree to which it is imitated"[333]. When St. Thomas says that a creature is likened to the divine intellect through its participating in an act of being, this means that it is through such participation that a finite essence is made *actually* like its respective divine idea[334]. Doolan quotes Fabro to explain that the difference between the exemplarism of the divine ideas and that of the divine nature lies in the fact that in the former the resemblance of the exemplate to the exemplar is of a formal nature: "[C]reated essences derive from the divine essence by the intermediary of the divine Ideas, and this derivation formally follows the relationship of exemplarity. Next, every essence, although it is act in the formal order, is created as potency that becomes actualized by the participated *esse* that it receives: its actuality is thus given by the 'mediation' of *esse*"[335]. Doolan comments on Fabro's position as follows:

> According to the formal order, then, a created essence is assimilated to its divine idea through itself. But according to the order of *reality*, it is assimilated to its idea through the mediation of its act of being; for in itself the essence is only potentially like that exemplar. It is for this reason, therefore, that Thomas holds a thing to be like the divine intellect through participating in *esse*[336].

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[331] J. WIPPEL, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 177-194.

[332] C. FABRO, *PC*, 647; *Participation et causalité*, 635.

[333] G. DOOLAN, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas…*, 237.

[334] See G. DOOLAN, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas…*, 237.

[335] C. FABRO, *PC*, 643; *Participation et causalité*, 630; "Elementi per una dottrina…", *ET*, 438; "The Intensive Hermeneutics…", 474: "[C]reated essences stem from the divine essence through divine Ideas, and this derivation is formally by way of exemplarity. Furthermore every essence, although an act in the formal order, is created as potency to be actualized by the participated *esse* which it receives, so that its actuality is 'mediated' through the *esse*".

[336] G. DOOLAN, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas…*, 238.

Doolan concludes that, strictly speaking, for St. Thomas, the similitude between created essence and idea does not involve the essence participating in the idea; thus, we should not speak about a participation in the divine ideas. A real or ontological participation involves both a receiver and a received principle. Created essence receives an act of being, but there is nothing ontologically prior to receive that essence itself. Doolan writes:

> Although created essence does not participate in its exemplar idea, the finite being (*ens*) of which it is a principle does participate in a likeness of the exemplar that is the divine nature. Through such participation, the created essence receives and limits *esse*. This limitation, however, is dependent upon the ontologically prior formation of the divine idea that determines the created essence's limited mode of being. Thus, while the divine nature is imitable in itself, a finite being actually imitates it only because God knows his nature as imitable and wills it actually to be imitated[337].

The mode of being of the created essence, then, is "determined by its divine idea, but its actuality is determined by the participation of the finite being (*ens*) in a likeness of the divine nature. […] As the exemplar causes of created essence, the divine ideas are the causes of a principle of potency that requires a principle of act; as the exemplar cause of the act of being, the divine nature is the cause of an act that requires a principle of limitation"[338]. As to the question of priority, according to the intentional order, the causality of the divine ideas is prior to that of the divine nature since the divine ideas determine the mode of being of the created essence; according to the order of reality, the exemplarism of the divine nature is prior to that of the divine ideas because it makes that essence actually to exist[339]. Doolan holds that the created essence, its accidents and other formal perfections, may be termed participations, but only as participations *of* the likeness of the divine essence and not as participations *in* the divine ideas[340].

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[337] G. DOOLAN, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas…*, 242.

[338] G. DOOLAN, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas…*, 243.

[339] See G. DOOLAN, *Aquinas on the Divine Ideas…*, 243.

[340] Throughout his exposition, Doolan refers to the fact that by proposing one line of participation between the created *ens* and the divine nature, the objections of R. te Velde can be effectively answered.

We have seen in this section that Fabro's texts on dynamic-causal, transcendental participation have been interpreted in two different ways over the last decades. On the one hand, philosophers like J. Aertsen and R. te Velde rightly question and criticize Fabro's use of the terms "double creation" and "distinct creation" when speaking about the derivation of creatures from God. Aertsen himself proposes a double participation according to Geiger's division and in agreement with his twofold reduction of creatures according to truth (exemplary causality) and being (efficient causality). R. te Velde argues that only one line of participation is necessary, yet reinterprets key principles of Thomistic metaphysical thought in order to account for this. On the other hand, philosophers such as Wippel and Doolan adopt, in large part, Fabro's interpretation and do not call attention to Fabro's problematic use of the phrase "double creation", nor interpret Fabro as sustaining a double participation. In particular, Wippel highlights Fabro's thesis that composition and similitude are intimately connected in participation. Wippel, however, accounts for the prior limitation of the form by means of a participation by similitude (Geiger). For his part, Doolan argues that, properly speaking, there is not a relationship of participation between the created essence and its divine idea. Created *ens* participates in a likeness of the exemplar of the divine nature. Key to Doolan's interpretation is the distinction between two modes of exemplarism (according to the divine ideas and according to the divine nature) and the Fabrian distinction between a formal consideration and a real-actual consideration of the derivation of finite *ens*.

Doolan, in my opinion, effectively interprets Fabro's text on the derivation of created essence and created *esse* in accordance with St. Thomas's texts on the same. Fabro's texts, I argue, should be interpreted as holding one line of transcendental participation between the created *ens* and God's essence. When speaking about the derivation of the created essence and created *esse*, it is true that Fabro employed the terms "double creation" (French version of *PC*), "double participation" (Italian version of *PC*) and "distinct creation" (both versions). These terms, however, are best interpreted, in light of Fabro's other texts on the problem, as referring to "con-creation". Rather than interpret "*doppia partecipazione*" as two transcendental lines of participation, it seems we are dealing with only one transcendental participation that can be considered from either a formal or real-actual point of view[341].

[341] Another possibility is that Fabro is somehow referring to his distinction between predicamental participation and transcendental participation.

The theories we have considered differ insofar as they give priority to one or another aspect or type of participation and account for the limitation of the essence and *esse* in various ways. The following chart may be helpful to summarize the most important points of the various proposals. I have listed them in order to whether they emphasize the role of "assimilation" (Peréz), two lines of participation "by composition" and "by similitude" (Geiger, Tyn, Wippel, Aertsen), or one line of participation (te Velde, Artola, Doolan and Fabro).

	Participation	**Limitation**
Pérez	Participation by similitude (assimilation) is fundamental and irreducible to participation by composition. Created *esse* is communicated by imitation and assimilation.	God's causal action is not limited by the creature. Assimilation is active reception and does not presuppose a composition of received (*esse*)-recipient (essence).
Geiger	Two lines of participation: participation by similitude or formal hierarchy has priority over participation by composition	Limitation of essence accounted for by participation by similitude; limitation of *esse* by participation by composition.
Tyn	Priority of participation by similitude over participation by composition; Geiger-Fabro theories differ in terms, not content.	Limitation of essence accounted for by participation by similitude; limitation of *esse* by participation by composition.
Wippel	Participation by similitude and by composition each have a certain priority; distinguishes three types of causal participation in *esse* (*esse commune*; *actus essendi*; *esse divinum*).	Limitation of essence accounted for by participation by similitude; strong defence of real distinction and the principle of the limitation of act by potency.
te Velde	One participation by which each creature is assimilated to God according to the particular degree in which it has being; creation is not a double act of first producing a recipient of being and then granting being to it.	Reinterpretation of formal causality, principle of the limitation of act by potency and the real distinction; *esse* is not limited *by* an essence, but rather *to* an essence.

Artola	One participation that can be considered according to the three types of extrinsic causality: according to efficient causality it refers to the creature's reception of *esse* from God; according to exemplary causality it refers creature's imitation of the divine essence and adequation to a divine idea; according to final causality it refers to the motion or tendency of things to the ultimate end or to the effect's partial possession of the end.	Creatures participate in *esse* in a limited way in conformity to the measure of their species, a measure given by the form. *Esse* is the ultimate perfection of beings and the first perfection of beings. *Esse* receives nothing from the form, but rather is limited by it.
Doolan	Through the exemplarism of the divine nature, the finite *ens* receives both its essence and its *esse*; through the exemplarism of the divine ideas, the finite being receives only its essence. Creatures do not "participate" in the divine ideas. Created *ens* participates in a likeness of the exemplar of the divine nature. Because a creature receives an act of being it participates in the divine nature by assimilation.	The created essence is formally assimilated to its divine idea through itself and really assimilated to its divine idea through its act of being. The divine idea determines the created essence's limited mode of being. The created essence receives and limits *esse*.
Fabro	There are not two "systems" of participation, but rather two types of participation: transcendental-analogical and predicamental-univocal; composition, causal dependence and similitude are all present and interrelated in transcendental participation; similitude of the creature to God is a consequence of participation in *esse*.	Created *esse* is received, limited and determined by the created essence. Created essences derive from the divine essence by the intermediary of the divine Ideas according to a relationship of exemplarity. Every essence is created as potency and actualized by participated *esse*, which it receives; the actuality of the essence is mediated by *esse*. The created essence is limited *in* itself and not *by* itself.

In light of this summary, we can establish the following. Fabro's theory of creation and transcendental causal participation can be improved upon by taking into consideration some of the contributions of three of the other authors. First of all, Wippel's distinction between three ways of speaking about participation in *esse* is of upmost importance in the interpretation of St. Thomas's texts. At the same time, I am hesitant to reduce this participation, as he does, to the third mode of participation (effect-cause) outlined in *In Boethii De Hebdomadibus*, lect. 2. I am of the opinion that participation in *esse* can ultimately be spoken about according to all three modes and that there is a correspondence between the first mode (particular-universal) and participation in *esse commune*, the second mode

(subject-form) and participation in *actus essendi* and the third mode (effect-cause) and participation in *esse divinum*. Second, I hold that Doolan's interpretation of the role of the divine ideas as exemplar causes is substantially correct. Fabro's intuitions gain both rigor and clarity in Doolan's work on participation and exemplary causality. In this regard, I also find Artola's distinction between *adequation* to the divine idea and *imitation* of the divine nature helpful. A future study will have to develop the relationship between the predicamental participation of the individual in a species and genus and the mediatory role of the divine ideas and the divine exemplars. Lastly, the incorporation of a reflection on final causality and participation would complete the theory expounded by Fabro. Here, Artola's work on participation in the divine nature according to final causality offers some initial contributions to such a study.

4.2.3.2 Participative structure of created *ens*

At this point, we can consider anew the structure of created *ens* as *ens per participationem*. I will limit my considerations to the role of the created essence in the structure and composition of finite *ens*. The theme of subsistence and inherence as the modes of being of the substance and the accidents will be touched on briefly at the end of section 5.3.

Several authors have brought attention either directly or indirectly to Fabro's thought on the role of the created essence: in 1974, W. Norris Clarke contrasted his interpretation of Fabro's view of essence (as the "limiting subject" of *esse*) with his own view of essence as an "intrinsic negative principle"; in his book *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (2000), J. Wippel critiques Clarke's view and proposes the essence-principle in finite *ens* as "relative non-being"; and in a 2008 article, A. Contat properly expounds Fabro's view of essence, highlighting why it is not a purely negative principle and in what sense it is a limiting principle of *actus essendi*. A look at their discussion will help us determine more precisely Fabro's thought on the role of the created essence in the structure of finite *ens*.

In a 1974 conference, at which Fabro presided, W. Norris Clarke focused his lecture and subsequent article on a "dispute within Thomism" over the role of the essence in the doctrine of the real distinction. He asks: "Is the essence a positive or a negative limiting principle?"[342]. Clarke holds

[342] See W. N. CLARK, "The Role of Essence Within St. Thomas' Essence-Existence Doctrine: Positive or Negative Principle? A Dispute Within Thomism",

that classical commentators (such as John of St. Thomas and Cajetan) interpreted *esse*, in relation to essence, in an overly-extrinsic fashion. For them, the act of being (*esse*) is presented merely as "an actualizing principle which actualized from without the perfection that was proper and intrinsic to essence almost in its own right […] but which remained potential until actualized or made present by the act of *esse*"[343]. This interpretation, he argues, fails to grasp the great original insight of St. Thomas, namely, that it is *esse* itself which is the central core of all perfections: "[*Esse*] contains within itself eminently all perfection and confers them on creatures according to the limited mode of receiving them proper to each. Thus, the principle of essence does not bring any perfection of its own to its composition with the act of existence, but is a limiting potency entirely within the all-inclusive ambit of *esse* itself"[344]. Clarke then observes that within this "existentialist" interpretation of Thomistic thought (here he names Gilson, Geiger, De Finance and Fabro), there still remain two different ways of conceiving the nature and role of essence.

The first conception is labeled by Clarke as the "thick essence" conception: this conception "conceives the essence as a positive receiving subject, given reality indeed by the act of existence which actualizes it and pours into it its own perfection, but nonetheless constituted as a *distinct positive subject* which exercises the act of existence; it is the essence properly speaking *which* exists, is *that which* exists, although by means of, or through the power of, the act of existence"[345]. This, Clarke holds, is the view of C. Fabro and J. Owens. The view has the advantage of maintaining lines of communication "with the traditional notion of essence as positive perfection, deriving from both the Platonic and Aristotelian notions of form as locus of perfection"[346].

The second conception, the "thin essence" conception (held, according to Clarke, by G. Phelan, W. Carlo and Clarke himself), holds that "the only kind of principle that the act of existence can tolerate in composition with it is an intrinsic principle of limitation only, that makes no positive

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in Pontificia Accademia Romana di San Tommaso d'Aquino (ed.), *Tommaso d'Aquino nel suo settimo centenario. Atti del Congresso Internazionale* (Roma-Napoli, 17-24 aprile 1974), vol. 6 *L'essere*, Edizioni Domenicane Italiane, Napoli 1977, 109.

[343] W. N. CLARK, "The Role of Essence…", 110.

[344] W. N. CLARK, "The Role of Essence…", 110.

[345] W. N. CLARK, "The Role of Essence…", 111.

[346] W. N. CLARK, "The Role of Essence…", 111.

contribution of its own but merely limits or 'contracts', as St. Thomas says, what would otherwise be the *per se* plenitude of existence down to a particular limited mode or level or degree"[347]. All positivity and perfection is on the side of the act of being. Essence only provides the intrinsic negative limiting principle. What results is a limited mode or act of existence, which reflects the limitation of God's own perfection thought up in a determinate divine idea of a possible limited imitation of his own infinite plenitude. "*That* which exists in this conception would no longer be the essence as positive subject, which would *have* existence, but rather the *limited act of existence* itself, which would be the subject. Finite beings would thus *be* finitized-acts-of-existence, not essences which *have* existence". One advantage in this "thin" conception of essence, Clarke holds, is that stress is laid not of the real composition of two positive principles, but rather on the limited participation in *esse*. Finite being is a partial affirmation through the positive principle of *esse* and a partial negation through the negative principle of essence. "The principle of essence as pure intrinsic limit *constitutes* the finitized act of existence as a new subject in its own right"[348]. In this "thin" conception of essence, the characterization of a "real composition" in finite being is shown to be a secondary technical device used to explain the basic notion of limited participation in *esse*.

Two things should be mentioned here. First, Clarke's characterization of Fabro's view of essence as "limiting subject" is somewhat mistaken. Clarke rightly says that that Fabro holds that the essence is a limiting *principle* in a substance, yet, at the same time, Fabro also holds that the "subject" of the composition is *ens*, namely, the substance which has the act of being[349]. Secondly, Clarke's position, in my opinion, goes too far in

[347] W. N. CLARK, "The Role of Essence…", 112.

[348] W. N. CLARK, "The Role of Essence…", 113.

[349] See C. FABRO, *Metaphysica*, Liber secundus, 212-215 and 231; *Ibid.*, "Essenza", *Enciclopedia Cattolica*, vol. 5: "Se l'ente è il concreto sussistente che esiste o che ha l'atto di l'essere, l'essenza è la speciale 'natura' che quest'atto fa esistere. L'essenza esprime nel suo contenuto una 'partecipazione' della infinita perfezione della divina natura; essa determina ad ogni essere il proprio posto nella gerarchia degli esseri; ne fonda, dirige e attua le rispettive possibilità di sviluppo"; *Ibid.*, "Sussistenza", *Enciclopedia Cattolica*, vol. 11, 1598: "Per precisare la terminologia, si può quindi distinguere: a) *l'essenza* o *natura*, ch'è il costitutivo formale di una qualsiasi cosa; b) la '*sostanza prima*' cioè l'individuo reale o '*ipostasi'* o '*supposito'* che è la realtà concreta esistente nella sua sufficienza ontologica (See *Quodl.*, II, q. 2, a. 2, c); c) la *sussistenza* dice l'attualità di detta

reducing the essence of an *ens* to a (purely) negative principle and in presenting the "finitized act of being" as that which is constituted as the "subject" of a finite *ens*[350].

These two ideas, that substance is properly the subject of the composition and that essence is a positive limiting-principle, are at the heart of J. Wippel's critique of the theory of Clarke, Phelan and Carlo:

> I would like to emphasize the point that for Aquinas essence is not to be identified with absolute nonbeing or nothingness. Because essence is not identical with the act of being of a given entity, it may be described as relative nonbeing. But this is not to imply that it enjoys no formal or positive content in itself. According to Aquinas's metaphysics, an essence can never be realized as such apart from its corresponding act of being (*esse*) within a given substantial entity. Strictly speaking, it is neither essence nor the act of being that exists as such in finite beings; it is rather the concrete subject or substance which exists by reason of its act of being. This same concrete subject is what it is by reason of its essence. This presupposes that the essence principle has its own formal content, and is an intrinsic constituent of the existing entity. This being so, here I would like to distance my understanding of essence as nonbeing from certain recent interpreters of Aquinas who have so emphasized this aspect of essence that they would reduce it to nothing but a given mode of existence[351].

Wippel argues that if we reduce essence to absolute nonbeing: 1) Thomas's way of accounting for the structure of particular beings would be compromised; 2) the essence would be unable to fulfill its function of receiving and limiting the act of being; and 3) we would compromise Thomas's understanding of participation. Wippel concludes by summarizing his position as follows: "The essence principle within a given substance receives and limits that same substance's *esse* and thereby enables the

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sostanza prima, ond'essa esiste in sé e si distingue dalle essenze astratte o 'sostanze seconde' esistenti soltanto come concetti nella mente, e nella realtà mediante gli individui che le realizzano; d) *la persona* aggiunge alla s. la dignità di natura razionale".

[350] W. N. CLARKE, "What Cannot Be Said in St. Thomas' Essence-Existence Doctrine", *The New Scholasticism* 48 (1974), 36: "The act of existence, accordingly, *as thus limited*, becomes the very subject which exists. The complete finite being, therefore, might more accurately be described, not as 'This essence, this man, exists,' but 'There is an existent here according to this limited mode (essence), the human mode, the canine mode, etc.".

[351] J. WIPPEL, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 190. Wippel's footnote specifies these interpreters as G. B. Phelan, W. N. Clarke and W. E. Carlo.

substance to participate in *esse*, to receive it in a particular fashion, without being identical with it"[352]. Based on Wippel's critique, what may be lacking in Clarke's view is the difference between speaking of the real composition between essence and *esse* as constitutive *principles* of finite *ens* and speaking about the relationship between substance and its *esse*: substance (*id cui competit esse in se*) is the "subject" which is composed of an essence and *esse*.

A. Contat alludes to this last point in his recent summary of Fabro's position on essence as a limiting principle. Contat first notes that Fabro does not reduce essence to a pure potency (like matter)[353]. In the Fabrian conception, the essence is in potency and is potency with respect to *esse* and is the recipient and limit of being. Secondly, there is no "entity" of the essence which precedes its position in existence, as if the essence were an act which extrinsically receives something else (existence) from an exterior act (*esse* understood simply as position in existence). Contat continues:

> [O]n the contrary, the entire reality of the essence comes to it from *esse* as intensive act. This does not mean that the essence is a pure potency, on par with prime matter, but rather that its actuality is a received actuality, and consequently, in a sense which is not used often, a 'second' actuality with respect to that of *esse*. Fabro does not contest that essence is destined to specify *esse*, such that *ens* is such or such quiddity; but rightly underscores that such specification is not an actuation, and that, rather, it should be considered as a delimitation, by which the intensity of *esse* is *quasi*-enclosed within a certain measure. Fabro supports this doctrine, of capital importance in his view, largely with two commentaries by Aquinas on neo-Platonic authors and, more generally, with his mature works[354].

In the conclusion of his article, Contat once again takes up the Fabrian conception of essence, this time in reference to the principle "*forma dat*

[352] J. WIPPEL, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 192. Wippel's footnote states that: "This also seems to be a fundamental weakness in Geiger's attempt to assign priority to participation by similitude or formal hierarchy over participation by composition" (*Ibid.*, n. 41).

[353] For Fabro, even prime matter is positive. See his "The Problem of Being and the Destiny of Man", *TPM*, 161: "Prime matter (and potency in general) is not pure non-being, but belongs to being as a component part which is real and intrinsically positive".

[354] A. CONTAT, "Le figure della differenza ontologica…", 123.

esse" and draws attention to the two ways of considering the essence (*in se* as a potential principle and as formal act):

> In reality, "the effect of the form" to which one alludes is the being-in-act of *ens* (*esse in actu*), or rather its fact of being; but it cannot be its being as act (*esse ut actus*), namely the act of being properly speaking. The mediation of the form fully legitimates this distinction proposed by Cornelio Fabro: actuated by the act of being, the substantial form or essence transmits it to *ens* according to the intensity that it has fixed, and in this sense, the actual being of such an *ens* also comes from its specific form. Resolving the components of *ens* into the act of being, one can and should integrate, in this way, the formal causality of the essence. There are, then, two possible views of the essence: considered in itself, it is only the potential principle which limits the expansion of being, in *ens*, to a fixed degree of specification which does not occur until the substance exists; considered, on the other hand, as actuated by the act of being, the essence is the formal act which, in corporeal substances, actuates, in turn, prime matter, and which then demands the properties that are necessary to the *suppositum* thus instituted in order to operate. Under the first aspect – which is irreal – the essence is a potency; under the second aspect, it is in act, but it is only in virtue of the act of being[355].

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Doolan's and Contat's recent studies and interpretations undoubtedly highlight the actuality of Fabro's work on the creation and the participative structure of created *ens*. Throughout the presentation of Fabro's work, I have pointed out aspects of his theory that can be further developed and improved on in light of the work of other Thomists. Above all, we see that in Fabro's theory on creation, more attention needs to be given to exemplary and final causality, as well as to the interrelation between the limitation of form at the predicamental level (a structural problem) with the derivation of form according to exemplary causality (a causal, dynamic problem). Fabro's *NMP* and *PC* deal with the two problems separately, occasioning the need for a comprehensive treatise which includes both. Furthermore, it seems that more attention needs to be given to the problems surrounding the distinction between the participation of a created substance in *esse* and the limiting role of the essence in a created substance.

[355] A. CONTAT, "Le figure della differenza ontologica…", 240.

5. The intensive notion of *esse*

When properly carried out metaphysical reflection ends in knowledge of *esse ut actus* or, as Fabro prefers to call it, "intensive *esse*" or even "intensive, emergent *esse*". In the end "intensive *esse*" is an analogous notion, which, in Fabro's works, means either: *esse ipsum* as the formal plexus of all perfection; *actus essendi* as a constitutive principle and the creature's participated actuating act; or God *Ipsum Esse Subsistens* or *Esse per essentiam*. Therefore, after considering the meaning of "intensive *esse*" (5.1) and the transcendental properties of being (5.2), I will conclude with a brief summary of Fabro's thought on the analogy of being and his commentary on Montagnes' work on analogy (5.3).

5.1 Intensive *esse*

In the debate that followed his confrontation of Heidegger's ontology with St. Thomas's metaphysics (1972), Fabro was asked to clarify his use of the term "intensive *esse*"[356]. Fabro answered that by "intensive *esse*" he simply means *esse* in the sense of act of all acts and perfection of all perfections and is obtained at the end of a type of resolution: "By intensive *esse* I mean *esse* as first act, ultimate act, as that which is most intimate. […] [I]ntensive act is intensive in the sense that it is the act of all acts, the perfection of all perfections. As act is placed at the base of any capacity or potency which acts, the actuating act of any act, of any perfection, is intimate to any act, to any perfection[357].

Fabro summarizes the principal Thomistic texts on *esse* and contrasts the notion of intensive *esse* with the notion of *existentia*, which characteristic of formalistic Scholasticism as follows:

> In the synthesis that is *ens*, *esse* is the more formal principle, or *the* act *par excellence*, and this on two distinct levels. In the predicamental sense *esse* is the activation of essence, which itself is related to *esse* as potency (*De Potentia,* q. 7, a. 2 ad 9). In the transcendental sense, to the extent that any

[356] "Dibattito congressuale", *Sapienza* 26 (1973), 372: L. Bogliolo: "Al P. Fabro. Lei usa molto questa espressione: *essere intensivo*. Non si potrebbe usare altro termine; direi *interiore*. Di conseguenza si può dire che l'atto d'essere è l'interiorità di ogni interiorità? Il termine *intensivo*, senz'altra precisazione, non è immediatamente perspicuo".

[357] C. FABRO, "Dibattito congressuale", 373-374.

> other act or perfection presupposes and is founded on *esse*, the latter is the actualization of every act and the perfection of all perfections (*Summa Theo.* I, q. 4, a. 1 ad 3; I-II, q. 2, a. 5 ad 2). *Esse* is, therefore, the primary act, the simplest, most formal, most intimate, and most immediate (*De anim.* 1 ad 17, 9; *De Veritate*, q. 23, a. 4 ad 7; *Summa Theo.* I, q. 8, a. 1; *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 1, 23). Consequently, as primary and absolute perfection, in itself including and transcending all perfections, *esse* is the most appropriate of all the names that can be attributed to God, or better – in light of the teaching on analogy – the least inappropriate (*In I Sent.* d. 8, q. 1, a. 3; *De Potentia* q. 2, a. 1; *Summa Theo.* q. 12, a. 2). Thus understood, *esse* is the proper effect of God and indicates the radical production of creation that affects not only becoming but primary matter itself and pure spiritual substances (*Comp. Theo.* 1, 68; *Summa Contra Gentiles* 3, 66). This can be called the "intensive notion" of *esse*, as distinguished from the notion of *existentia* of the formal-predicative kind of Aristotle and the formal-causal (extrinsic) kind of the Augustian-Avicennian tradition[358].

"Intensive *esse*" is the first or primary act[359] and the ultimate act[360]; the most perfect[361] and the most formal act *in se*[362]; and the most intimate and profound act[363]. *Esse* is first act because the other acts pertain to it; it is the ultimate act because it is the act of *ens* and embraces both substantial and accidental principles:

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[358] C. FABRO, "Existence", 723.

[359] *De Veritate*, q. 23, a. 4 ad 7: "Esse non dicit actum quis it operatio transiens in aliquid extrinsecum temporaliter producendum, sed *actum quasi primum*".

[360] *Q. D. De Anima*, a. 6 ad 2: "*Ipsum esse est actus ultimus* qui participabilis esta b omnibus; ipsum autem nihil participat; unde si sit aliquid quod sit ipsum esse subsistens, sicut de Deo dicimus, nihil participare dicimus".

[361] I, q. 4 a. 1 ad 3: "*Ipsum esse est perfectissimum omnium*, comparatur enim ad omnia ut actus. Nihil enim habet actualitatem, nisi inquantum est, unde *ipsum esse est actualitas omnium rerum, et etiam ipsarum formarum. Unde non comparatur ad alia sicut recipiens ad receptum, sed magis sicut receptum ad recipiens.* Cum enim dico esse hominis, vel equi, vel cuiuscumque alterius, *ipsum esse consideratur ut formale et receptum*, non autem ut illud cui competit esse".

[362] I, q. 7, a 1: "Illud autem quod est *maxime formale* omnium, est ipsum esse".

[363] I, q. 8, a. 1: "*Esse autem est illud quod est magis intimum cuilibet, et quod profundius omnibus inest, cum sit formale respectu omnium quae in re sunt*".

> *Esse* in its intensive meaning conserves the ambivalence or dialectic of *first* and *ultimate* act, as the texts affirm: it is the "first act" because the actuation in the real sphere of every form and nature pertain to it. The other actuations are not in act but only express "capacity of being". Moving up from act into act, *esse* is placed first: as accidental forms are in virtue of the substantial form and in virtue of the act of the composite to which they adhere, so also the form and the whole exist in virtue of *esse*. […] And *esse* is also the "ultimate act", because it is the act of the complete subsisting *ens*: therefore it presupposes the structure of *ens* in its constitutive, substantial and accidental principles… already complete in their order[364].

For Fabro, the intensive notion of *esse* expresses *esse* as the emergent plexus of all perfections, God as *Ipsum Esse Subsistens*, and the created, participated *actus essendi* of the creature:

> As the third and ultimate [notion], we have the 'intensive notion' of *esse*, […] as such [*esse*] expresses the absolute perfection and emergent plexus of all perfections which, in this way, reveal the participations in *esse* itself. This notion is the point of arrival and the conclusion of the entire Thomistic speculation which determines the 'metaphysical nature' (essence!) of God as pure *esse* (*esse per essentiam*, *esse imparticipatum*) and the creature as *ens* (*esse per participationem*)[365].

In "La problematica dello *esse* tomistico", this point is articulated in terms of resolution (See *De substantiis separatis*, ch. 9). Fabro writes that following the determination of *esse* as intensive act and God as *Ipsum Esse Subsisens*, there is the resolutive determination of the creature as *ens per participationem* by means of the real composition of essence and participated *esse*. In contrast to God, who is *Ipsum Esse Subsistens* and whose substance is identical to his *esse*, the participated *actus essendi* of the creature is *adhaerens* insofar as it is the "act of the substance"[366].

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[364] C. FABRO, "La problematica dello *esse* tomistico", *TPM*, 114.

[365] C. FABRO, "La problematica dello *esse* tomistico", *TPM*, 108.

[366] C. FABRO, "La problematica dello *esse* tomistico", *TPM*, 110: "Ed è in questa risoluzione che scaturisce nel tomismo – in seguito cioè alla determinazione dello *esse* come atto intensivo e di Dio ch'è lo *esse subsistens* cioè *separatum* ovvero l'attuazione dell'*esse* nella sua pienezza e purezza formale – la determinazione risolutiva della creatura come *ens per participationem* mediante la composizione reale di essenza ed *esse participatum* ovvero *adhaerens* come '*actus* substantiae'".

As an act, "intensive *esse*" is approached as a first principle and foundation. Fabro avoids calling the apprehension of *esse* a concept of the intellect, since concept strongly refers to a formal *content* that is abstracted from reality. As we have seen, Fabro calls the apprehension or experience of *esse* an emergence and the presence of act in consciousness. He uses the term "dialectical" in the emergent dynamic of *resolutio* to stress *esse* as act and not abstracted content[367].

It is interesting to note that the term "intensive *esse*" is not used by St. Thomas and that Fabro has the merit in coining the phrase and relating it to St. Thomas's use of "intense whiteness" and "intense heat". Of this, F. O'Rourke writes:

> Although the term *esse intensivum* does not appear in the works of St Thomas, it expresses with admirable accuracy his notion of being as the exhaustive and comprehensive plenitude of the existential perfection of things. It has been coined by Cornelio Fabro after Aquinas' phrase *albedo intensive infinita*, which is used to illustrate the presence of a perfection in a cause which constitutes the essence and fullness of that perfection, in contrast to its limited participation by an effect.[368] It indicates the infinite intensity and simple fullness which precedes dispersion and division throughout any multiplicity. This is a pervasive background motif in both Dionysius and Aquinas: the cause possesses the perfection more eminently than that which had it as received. The effect is present *virtually*, i.e. according to a greater power; its perfection is contained *more intensely* in the source. Following from this is the pre-eminent presence of all perfections within the comprehensive plenitude of Being and, more originally and profoundly, their unlimited presence in absolute, infinite divine Being. Cornelio Fabro is the exponent of St Thomas whose work has contributed most to an appreciation of this aspect of Aquinas' original vision of being[369].

At the same time, O'Rourke notes that Fabro could have benefited more from the notion of *virtus essendi*[370]. As St. Thomas's texts evidence, the

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[367] C. FABRO, "Existence", 724.

[368] Here F. O'Rouke quotes *De Veritate*, q. 29, a. 3: "Si enim intelligatur corpus album infinitum non propter hoc albedo intensive infinita erit, sed solum extensive, et per accidens". This distinction between *intensive* and *extensive* corresponds to that between *virtualis* and *dimensiva*".

[369] F. O'ROURKE, *Pseudo-Dionysius & the Metaphysics of Aquinas*, E.J. Brill, Leiden 1992, 155.

[370] F. O'ROURKE, *Pseudo-Dionysius & the Metaphysics of Aquinas*, 166: "Since *esse* is what is most efficacious within each thing, grounding and

terms "intensive white" and "intensive heat" are used in the argument that *Ipsum Esse Subsistens* cannot be but one[371]. Therefore, all other beings are composed of *esse* as act and substance as receptive potency. St. Thomas writes:

> For there can be only one being which is *ipsum esse*; just as some form, if it should be considered by itself, can be only one. That is why the things which are diverse in number are one in species because the nature of the species considered in itself is one. Just as therefore it is one according to the consideration of it while it is being considered, so it would be one according to *esse* if it existed or subsisted *per se*. The same argument applies to the genus in relation to species, until we reach the *ipsum esse* which is most common. There is therefore only one *esse* subsisting through itself. Hence it is impossible that other than it, there should be something which is *esse* alone. Now everything that is, has *esse*. Therefore in every being other than the first, there is present both *ipsum esse* as the act, and the substance of the thing having *esse* as a potency receptive of the act that is *esse*[372].

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actualising its every perfection, it is, in the light of this passage, most appropriate to speak of the intensity of the act of being at the inner heart of the individual, and of the comprehensive infinity of its existential intensity within *Ipsum Esse Subsistens*. From the many texts and varied contexts in which Aquinas elaborates the notions of virtual quantity, denoting the intensity of action and existential and formal perfection, we can conclude that it is both valid and enlightening to speak of the virtual intensity of being, and of *virtus essendi* as the intensive power or perfection of being. Cornelio Fabro does not seem to have exploited the wide wealth of texts by Aquinas on virtual quantity and the connection between *virtus* and intensity. Perhaps this is not all too surprising since it is indeed only *en passant* that Aquinas himself makes explicit the identity between 'virtual' and 'intensive' quantity".

[371] See C. FABRO, "La problematica dello *esse* tomistico", 217: Heat: I, q. 4, a. 2: "God is *ipsum esse per se subsistens*: Consequently, He must contain within himself the whole perfection of being. For it is clear that if some hot thing has not the whole perfection of heat, this is because heat is not participated in its full perfection; but if this heat were self-subsisting, nothing of the virtue of heat would be wanting to it. Since therefore God is subsisting being itself, nothing of the perfection of being can be wanting to Him". Whiteness: I, q. 44, a. 1: "Now it has been shown above (q. 3, a. 4) when treating of the divine simplicity that God is the essentially self-subsisting Being; and also it was shown (q. 11, a. 3, a. 4) that subsisting being must be one; as, if whiteness were self-subsisting, it would be one, since whiteness is multiplied by its recipients. Therefore all beings apart from God are not their own being, but are beings by participation".

[372] *De substantiis separatis*, ch. 8.

Intensive *esse*, in the interpretation of Fabro, is the source of all the ontological perfection of the substance, and, therefore, constitutive of *ens* and all its effects. Intensive *esse* is that which makes the substance to subsist according to the degree indicated by the essence[373]. With respect to being of the accidents of the creature, there is only one *esse* which actuates the substantial essence, and, therefore, which actuates the accidental forms. According to the analogy of proportionality: "While the principal mode of being, i.e., subsistence, belongs to substance, so the secondary mode of being, i.e., inherence rather than a proper *esse* or *actus essendi*, belongs to accidents"[374]. According to the analogy of intrinsic attribution: "*esse* does not belong to accident (*ens secundum quid*) otherwise than by participation in substance (*ens simpliciter*)"[375].

5.2 Transcendental properties of *ens*

The essential points of Fabro's thought on the transcendentals are found in four texts: his chapter on the transcendentals at the end of *Metaphysica*; a brief reference to the transcendentals in *PC* as determinations of *ens*; a 1966 article which deals with the transcendentals in relation to the initial notion of *ens*; and, finally, a 1974 article which outlines the deduction of the transcendentals[376].

Fabro's presentation of the transcendentals in *Metaphysica* is notably Neo-scholastic in character insofar as he gives very little attention to the transcendentals *res* and *aliquid*. He notes only that *res* connotes the essence of *ens* and signifies everything in reality that has an essence. *Aliquid*, on the other hand, is reduced to the role of emphasizing the unity of *ens* with respect to other. This quasi-elimination of *res* and *aliquid*, leaves only three transcendental for consideration: *unum, verum* and *bonum*.

In his initial remarks, Fabro contrasts the two ways that our intellect progresses from the confused, initial apprehension of *ens* to a more distinct

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[373] See A. CONTAT, "Le figure della differenza ontologica…", 125; C. FABRO, "La problematica dello *esse* tomistico", *TPM*, 119.

[374] C. FABRO, "The Intensive Hermeneutics…", 482.

[375] C. FABRO, "The Intensive Hermeneutics…", 483.

[376] I note that in 1983, during a course entitled, "L'emergenza dell'essere", (audio version in the archives of the Cultural Institute of Cornelio Fabro), Fabro laments the fact that he did not draft a Thomistic *Science of Logic* that would have dealt with the development of the human intellect and the doctrine of the transcendentals.

apprehension. The first way is concerned with the properties of *ens qua ens* that are attributed to every *ens* according to the mode and degree of its nature. The second way considers the divisions of *ens* according to diverse modes and oppositions, such as the division of *ens* into the categories, act and potency, essence and the act of being. While the categories contract *ens* in some way, the transcendentals are said to broaden *ens* by making explicit what is implicitly contained in *ens*.

Accordingly, the transcendentals are like interior expansions of *ens* and are derived from *ens* by negation and relation. *Unum* expresses *ens* as its negation or determination, while *verum* and *bonum* are perfective: *verum* is *ens* that perfects according to the notion of the species; *bonum* perfects according to being (*De veritate*, q. 21, a. 1). The transcendentals are convertible with *ens* according to the *suppositum*, yet according to reason or to the intention that are distinct.

Like his *Metaphysica*, Fabro's *Partecipazione e causalità* considers only three transcendentals, *unum, verum* and *bonum*. He argues that the movement or dialectic that the transcendentals impress upon *ens* is notional and not real[377]. This seems to mean that the dialectic proper to the development of the transcendentals is unlike the method by which *ens* is divided into the categories of substance and accidents and the resolution by which the real distinction between essence and the act of being is discovered and ultimately founded. According to Fabro, the notional progress proper to the transcendentals concerns the comprehension of the concept of *ens* and not the perfection of *esse*: "The transcendentals are concepts and not perfections: this is because they intensify the concept of *ens* and are not the perfections of things"[378]. With this, Fabro does not deny that the transcendentals are founded ontologically on the perfection of the act of being. He is only stressing that the additions of the transcendentals are conceptual and not real. In fact, the notional additions of the transcendentals are said to be internal to *ens qua ens* and are presented as "reduplications": *unum*, for example, implies a negation or privation of multitude or division and, as such, is positive since it is a negation of something that can be considered as a negation. The second reduplication is *verum* (*ens* referred to knowing), the third is *bonum* (*ens* referred to the appetite)[379]. According to Fabro, the *Diremtion*[380] of the transcendentals presupposes the *Diremtion* of

[377] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 218.
[378] C. FABRO, *PC*, 219.
[379] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 219.
[380] See Chapter One, 4.4.2, "Fabro's use of the Hegelian term *Diremtion*".

ens-esse and the real composition and deals with composite *ens* in reference to its "notional intensification" by the transcendentals[381]. Fabro holds that in the second *Diremtion*, the transcendentals "qualify" *ens* by expressing something that the term "*ens*" does not; the additions of the transcendentals are notional extensions and not real limitations. In this intensification, *ens* is shown to have a conceptual superiority over *verum* and *bonum* insofar as it follows from the perfection of *actus essendi*[382].

The third text of Fabro, written in 1966, calls for a complete re-dimensioning of Thomistic metaphysics in light of the transcendentals:

> A radical grounding of Thomistic metaphysics must, therefore, have its center or intentional focus no longer, as up to now a certain tradition of Aristotelian predominance has accustomed us to think, in a treatise on substance and the categories, but on one concerning the transcendentals[383].

Unlike the previous texts, more attention is given to the transcendental *res*: in fact, the division of the categories (as content of *ens*) is seen as a *Diremtion* of *res*. The categories remain in the area of "content"[384]. In contrast, the transcendentals are considered as a *Diremtion* of *ens*: an interior dividing up (expressed as *additio* or intentional expansion of *ens*) and recomposing within the original comprehensive intentional unity of *ens* (expressed as *reductio* to the fundament of *ens*)[385]. The transcendental sphere is generated by a twofold position: *ens in se* (absolutely considered) and *ens in ordine ad aliud* (*ens* considered in relation to another).

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[381] C. FABRO, *PC*, 219: "This is the fundamental 'Diremtion' of *esse*, from the logical-formal level of the semantic relationship between participle (in the two-fold verbal and substantive form) and the verb, it passes to the metaphysical level to express the fundamental dialectical tension of *esse* and the primary composition of finite *ens*. In the second 'Diremtion' we deal with *ens*, thus composed, regarding its 'supposition' (significability) with respect to the collateral terms of *unum*, *verum*, *bonum* which express its interior growth and represent its 'notional intensification'".

[382] C. FABRO, *PC*, 221. See *De Veritate*, q. 21, a. 2: "Ipsum igitur esse habet rationem boni. Unde sicut impossibile est quod sit aliquid ens quod non habeat esse, ita necesse est ut omne ens sit bonum ex hoc ipso quod esse habet; quamvis etiam et in quibusdam entibus multae aliae rationes bonitatis superaddantur supra suum esse quo subsistunt".

[383] C. FABRO, "The Transcendentality of *ens-esse* …", 426.

[384] C. FABRO, "The Transcendentality of *ens-esse* …", 410.

[385] See C. FABRO, "The Transcendentality of *ens-esse*…", 408-409.

Like the other transcendentals, *res* follows upon *ens* and is in "some manner" already contained in *ens*. In the determination of *res* as content of *ens*, Aquinas announces the real distinction between *esse* as act and essence as content or subject of the act of being[386]. *Unum* and *multa* (*aliquid*) are considered as following a dialectic of negation, while *verum* and *bonum* follow a dialectic of relation (*ordo unius ad alterum*). Fabro reiterates that in this articulation of the transcendentals, *ens* is the activating ground of the whole intentional order. *Ens* is the transcendental of the transcendentals, it is the *transcendentalizing* one[387]. *Ens* emerges over the other transcendentals as their principle and ground owing to *esse*, the act of every act and the perfection of every perfection[388].

The fourth text, an article from 1974, argues that Kant and modern thought in general begin with *res,* ignore *ens*, and give precedence to *unum* insofar as the unity of the object comes from the thinking subject. In contrast, Aquinas places *unum* in third place, after *ens* and *res*. This means that *unum* has a twofold foundation: "as content in the constitution of *res* and as act in the presence of *ens* as bearer of *esse* which is the founding act"[389]. At this point, Fabro once again introduces the term *Diremtion* to speak about the transcendental deduction or articulation of *ens*:

> The *Diremtion* of the transcendentals is not in fact uniform, but rather it implies a distinguishing (resting) within *ens*: this means that *ens* remains as the presupposition and the foundation, indispensable and inexhaustible, and together therefore that *ens* is point of arrival of the determinations as of the enrichment brought by the transcendentals[390].

Unlike Kant's transcendental procedure, the derivation of the transcendentals by Aquinas is not made by anticipating the conditions of objective unity, but rather by developing what is implicit (the transcendentals) in what is explicit (*ens*)[391]. The first moment of the Thomistic *Diremtion* of the transcendentals is that of *res*: it expresses the determination within *ens* of the static moment of the content in its distinction from the act of being. The second moment is *unum* as the

[386] See C. FABRO, "The Transcendentality of *ens-esse*…", 411.
[387] See C. FABRO, "The Transcendentality of *ens-esse*…", 420.
[388] See C. FABRO, "The Transcendentality of *ens-esse*…", 422.
[389] C. FABRO, "Il problema dell'essere e la fondazione della metafisica", 493.
[390] C. FABRO, "Il problema dell'essere e la fondazione della metafisica", 493-494.
[391] C. FABRO, "Il problema dell'essere e la fondazione della metafisica", 494.

determination of the indivision and integrity of *ens* in act. This unity includes that proper to the various compositions of finite *ens*, such as essence and *esse*, matter and form, subject and accidents[392].

Fabro's theses (1983) clarify that the transcendentals are not obtained by deduction or by induction, but rather, there is a "transcendental implication" on the absolute and relative plane[393].

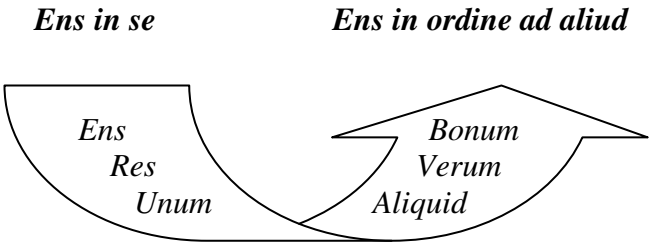
In summary, Fabro sees the articulation of the transcendentals as an interior, notional expansion of *ens* which makes explicit what was implicit in the confused apprehension of *ens* and as a *Diremtion* of *ens* which follows upon the *Diremtion* of the real distinction between *essentia* and *esse* (allowing the articulation of *res*), and which then proceeds dialectically according to negation (*unum et aliquid*) or relation (*verum et bonum*). In the intensification of *ens* by the transcendentals *ens* emerges over the other transcendentals due to *esse ut actus* insofar as, according to the method of *reductio*, it grounds the other transcendentals and is their point of return.

Before concluding this section, I would like to point out four areas of improvement to Fabro's theory of the transcendentals: First, while Fabro refers to both *additio* and *resolutio* in the context of the derivation or articulation of the transcendentals, the tasks of the two methods should be distinguished more clearly: the organized presentation of the transcendentals *in via iudicii* follows the method of composition (*additio*), while the discovery (*in via inventionis*) of the transcendentals as first notions and the ontological foundation of the transcendentals on *actus essendi* is accomplished by way of resolution.

Second, it is important to distinguish the noetical consideration of the transcendentals from the ontological consideration. The first founds the transcendentals on *ens* as *primum cognitum*, while the second founds the transcendentals in creatures on participated *esse*. Fabro tends to privilege the former approach (characteristic of *De veritate*, q. 1, a. 1) and only hints at the latter.

Third, the transcendentals form two triads that correspond to one another: *ens–res–unum* and *aliquid–verum–bonum*. Fabro tends to divide the transcendentals into three groups: absolute, negative and relative. Fabro does refer to the first triad as a group in his article from 1974, but does not explore the correspondence with the second triad, represented graphically as follows:

[392] C. FABRO, "Il problema dell'essere e la fondazione della metafisica", 494.
[393] C. FABRO, *IST*, 163.



Paralleling the two triads of transcendentals enables one: to compare the constitution of *ens* in its first perfection (*bonum secundum quid*) with its ordering to and attainment of its second or ultimate perfection through operation (*bonum simpliciter*); to establish the meaning of *res* in the definition of *verum* as *adaequatio intellectus et rei* as well as the role of *species* and *esse* in the ontological foundation of *verum*; and the relationship between *unum* and *multitudo.*

Lastly, it is necessary to pursue a theological foundation of the transcendentals according to the method of *resolutio secundum rem*. This would bring out the causal, participative and analogical relationship between the transcendentals as properties of created *ens* and their ultimate foundation on God, who is *Ipsum Esse Per Se Subsistens*, his essence, supremely One, diverse from all other beings, *Prima Veritas* and *Summum Bonum*.

5.3 Analogy the semantics of participation

In the Conclusion to *PC*, Fabro offers a synthesis of his view of analogy as "the semantics of the participation of *ens*". The exposition is divided into three points: 1) Analogy of proportionality; 2) Analogy of attribution; 3) Comprehensive conclusion: composition, causality, analogy.

Analogy of proportionality. The analogy of proportionality considers beings (for example, creature-Creator; accidents-substance): "from a static viewpoint, that is, from the viewpoint of the contents of reality which they actually possess *in facto esse*. This is a purely formal consideration, yet legitimate. It comes at the end of the speculative synthesis and, in the Thomistic conception of reality, is undoubtedly valid"[394]. At the transcendental level and from the static point of view, the structure of the creature is that of *ens per participationem*, while the "structure" of God is *Esse per essentiam.*

[394] C. FABRO, *PC*, 646-647.

Now, from a static-structural point of view, a creature is an *ens per participationem* on two levels: in the transcendental order, since it is a composite of essence and *esse*; in the predicamental order, since it is a composite of substance and accidents, and – in the case of corporeal substances – of matter and form. To the extent that a created substance is composed of essence and *esse*, it is as far removed from God as it can possibly be, and, in this respect, the terms "creature" and "God" admit of no measure or comparison. But since the essence of a creature (the substance) has its own participated *actus essendi*, its actualization is not merely a relation of extrinsic dependence, rather, it is based on the act of being in which it participates and which it has "within itself" as the proper terminus of divine causality[395].

Accordingly, we have two proportional similarities which correspond to one another on the transcendental and predicamental levels. Just as *Esse per essentiam* (as act) corresponds to *Ens per essentiam*, so participated *esse* (as act) corresponds to *ens per participationem*. This is the analogy of proportionality of *ens-esse* at the transcendental level:

$$\frac{\textit{Ens per essentiam}}{\textit{Esse per essentiam}} : \frac{\textit{Ens per participationem}}{\textit{Esse participatum}}$$

Similarly, while the principal mode of being, that of subsistence, belongs to substance, so the secondary mode of being, that of inherence belongs to accidents. This is the analogy of proportionality of *ens-esse* at the predicamental level:

$$\frac{\text{Substance}}{\text{Subsistence}} : \frac{\text{Accidents}}{\text{Inherence}}$$

Unlike Hegel, for whom the essence only constitutes a "negative moment" in the dialectic of being, St. Thomas conceives the essence on the fundament of creation of being *ex nihilo*. Thus, for St. Thomas, the essence is a positive-negative insofar as it expresses the mode and degree of participation of being and expresses it positively thanks to the derivation by "imitation" of the divine Ideas[396]. Once again, Fabro re-affirms a real derivation and participation of *esse* and a formal or mediated derivation of the essence. For St. Thomas, nothingness does not directly enter into the

[395] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 646-647.
[396] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 647.

dialectical constitution of the finite, but rather only indirectly due to the finite nature of the essence. This is not a negation, but rather a "limit". The finite is *ens*, yet is neither *esse* itself or nothing. To the degree *ens* distances itself from nothing, it indicates *Esse* as Other and it does this by means of the positive-negative moment of the essence. "It is this moment of the essence, which relates principally to the static analogy of proportionality, which is expressed in the tension of *similitude-dissimilitudo* according to the principle of the vertical 'fall' of being, which is, at the same time, the multi-form expansion of the inexhaustible divine fullness"[397]. In conclusion:

> It is precisely through the static analogy of proportionality that beings obtain, in their own order, their consistency of being insofar as every *ens* has its own essence which is actuated by their "own" participated act of being: unlike the metaphysics of a Dionysian-Avicennian inspiration for who God himself is the *esse* of existing things. For St. Thomas, then, in agreement with the demand of Heidegger, the "difference" between Being [*Essere*] and *ens* [*essente*] is founded on being, as intensive emergent act, which is "diversely" participated in every *ens*[398].

Analogy of intrinsic attribution. In contrast to the *static* analogy of proportionality, there is the *dynamic* analogy of intrinsic attribution. The former expresses a relation of *similarity*, while the latter expresses a relation of *foundation* and *dependence* of beings on *esse*. The analogy of proportionality emphasizes the Aristotelian aspect of the immanence of *esse* in beings. The analogy of attribution, on the other hand, stresses the Platonic aspect of radical dependence of participant beings on the pure perfection that is separate from them. The analogy of attribution is ground-laying with respect to the analogy of proportionality, for it seizes and expresses the *esse* of being in its emergence as participated act with regard to unparticipated act. In this sense it can be said that analogy of proportionality presupposes, and is based upon, analogy of attribution[399].

This amounts to saying that in the two examples of the analogy of being at the transcendental and predicamental levels: 1) "*esse* does not belong to the creature (*ens per participationem*) otherwise than by participation in the Creator (*Esse per essentiam*)"; 2) "*esse* does not belong to the accident (*ens secundum quid*) otherwise than by participation in

[397] C. FABRO, *PC*, 648.
[398] C. FABRO, *PC*, 648.
[399] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 648.

substance (*ens simpliciter*)"[400]. Fabro argues that the intrinsic belonging-together of the two analogies of *ens-esse* is reflected in the following Thomistic text on the goodness of all being: "Everything is therefore called good from the divine goodness, as from the first exemplary, effective and final principle of all goodness. Nevertheless, everything is called good by reason of the similitude of the divine goodness belonging to it, which is formally its own goodness, whereby it is denominated good"[401]. In the first sentence, we have a reference to the threefold extrinsic causal dependence of the creature on the Creator who is the ultimate exemplary, efficient and final cause-principle of all beings. On this is based the analogy of intrinsic attribution and the analogy of one (*per participationem*) to another (*per essentiam*). In the second sentence, we have a reference to the possession of the intrinsic, "formal" principle which is the "cause" of the similarity between the creature and the Creator. On this is based the analogy of proportionality and the relation made between the two proportions. In light of this distinction, Fabro writes that it is the analogy of attribution which accomplishes the ultimate "*resolutio*" of metaphysical discourse, which relates the many to the One, the diverse to the Identical, the composite to the Simple, and so on[402].

> Through his notion of intensive *esse* and the consequent distinction between *esse* and essence in creatures, Thomas not only duly emphasizes the "difference" between *esse* and *ens*, but he also succeeds in making God's "presence" in creatures more active and meaningful than in the panentheistic theories of Dionysius, Avicenna, Eckhart, Cusanus, Spinoza, and Hegel. Whereas in these latter theories God as Being is the *Act of the essences*, in Thomas' view God as *Esse per essentiam* is the principle and actuating cause of *esse per participationem*, which is the proper, actuating act of every real essence[403].

On this metaphysical background, there are two distinct aspects of the analogy of *ens-esse*. First, there is the aspect of the causal derivation of participated *esse* from *Esse per essentiam*. This involves a relationship of

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[400] C. FABRO, *PC*, 648.

[401] I, q. 6, a. 4: "Sic ergo unumquodque dicitur bonum bonitate divina, sicut primo principio exemplari, effectivo et finali totius bonitatis. Nihilominus tamen unumquodque dicitur bonum similitudine divinae bonitatis sibi inhaerente, quae est formaliter sua bonitas denominans ipsum".

[402] See C. FABRO, *PC*, 649.

[403] C. FABRO, *PC*, 649.

dependence of the former on the latter. Secondly, there is the aspect of the presence of *Esse per essentiam* in the participated *ens-esse* due to his "total causality" and his "coming down to" and "intertwining" into created being itself. "The Thomistic formula, *per essentiam, per potentiam, per praesentiam*, expresses most effectively, along with the presence of the Absolute in created beings, the highest degree of dependence of the finite on the Infinite"[404].

In the Thomistic conception of the finite, it is the essence which "distinguishes" *ens* from *esse*. Essence is the principle of the "*Diremtion* and thus constitutes the "difference" of beings from Being: "thus the relationship of God to the essence as such is that of Exemplar Cause and, therefore, remains at an infinite distance"[405]. In contrast, the relationship between *esse per essentiam* and *esse participatum* is of an immediate "belonging" (*appartenenza*) of act to Act, "where the 'difference' of the participation does not distance the two, but rather brings them closer: this, moreover, accomplishes the fall of the Absolute into the finite which is the divine presence as into the fundament of the reality of the essence itself and, therefore, as in the 'Fundament of the fundament', closing the circle of Being itself"[406]. Once again, Fabro reiterates the exemplary causal relationship between the created essence and the divine ideas and the direct, causal relationship between participated *esse* and divine *esse*.

Conclusion: composition, causality, analogy. Unlike the notion of participation, it is possible to distinguish between predicamental and transcendental analogy only in a very restricted sense. Predicamental analogy, in this case, is limited to the relationship between substance and accidents; transcendental analogy to the relationship of creatures to their Creator. The term "predicamental analogy", though, is almost contradictory since it is the predicamental order which constitutes the sphere of formal univocity. "Predicamental participation is therefore, strictly speaking, confined to univocity: the genus is actualized in the species by means of the specific difference, the individuals of the same species possess the same specific constitutive characteristics, and what distinguishes them is their individual notes"[407]. From the *formal* point of view, the notion applies in an equal (univocal) fashion to the two members and this is in contrast to the analogous notion, which is predicated of one primarily and of others in a

[404] C. FABRO, *PC*, 649.
[405] C. FABRO, *PC*, 650.
[406] C. FABRO, *PC*, 650.
[407] C. FABRO, *PC*, 650. See *Summa contra Gentiles*, I, ch. 32.

secondary way (*secundum prius et posterius*). At the same time, predicamental participation would not be a true participation unless it were founded on or related to the analogy of being. This involves considering the species and individuals, not on the formal-logical level, but rather as modes of being in concrete reality. Fabro explains:

> Thus, when seen from this metaphysical aspect of reality, Peter and Paul participate unequally in human nature, that is, each one shares humanity in his own way, inasmuch as each one, as previously seen, has a different esse: "The reason for this is that, since two things must be considered in a being, namely, its nature or quiddity and its esse, there must be in all univocal things a community of nature but not of esse, for any one esse is only in one thing. Hence human nature is not in two men according to the same esse. Hence also whenever a form signified by name is esse itself, there can be no question of univocity, for even being is not predicated univocally"[408]. For this reason we have defended the analogy of being with respect to individual singulars as within its normal scope since being as such cannot be but individual and singular. Thus predicamental participation functions as an intermediary and a notional bond between formal univocity and real analogy. It should always remain clear that the "passage to the limit" from the predicamental sphere to the transcendental one is operated uniquely by means of the reference to intensive emergent *esse*, which is the only "transcendental *medium*"[409].

Fabro's concluding lines to *PC* highlight this "passage to the limit" of the predicamental order by means of intensive emergent *esse*. As the conclusion to his *opus magnum* it confirms the centrality of our knowledge of *esse ut actus* in metaphysical reflection:

> Thus, however thought develops, it should always refer to *esse*, as to its act and foundation.
>
> *Esse* is the intensive emergent act, since it is the constitutive act of *ens* in act.
>
> *Esse ipsum* is the proper constitutive of God, from which creation, divine conservation and motion in creatures precede.

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[408] *In I Sent.*, d. 35, q. 1, a. 4: "Hujus ratio est, quia cum in re duo sit considerare: scilicet naturam vel quidditatem rei, et esse suum, oportet quod in omnibus univocis sit communitas secundum rationem naturae, et non secundum esse; quia unum esse non est nisi in una re; unde habitus humanitatis non est secundum idem esse in duobus hominibus: et ideo quandocumque forma significata per nomen est ipsum esse, non potest univoce convenire, propter quod etiam ens non univoce praedicatur".

[409] C. FABRO, *PC*, 650-651.

> *Esse* is the foundation on which causality is founded and to which it refers in its transcendental and predicamental expansion.
>
> Lastly, *esse* is the principle that orders the predication of the real in its progress from formal univocalness to real analogy.
>
> There are therefore three moments in the foundation of the truth of being, and they are all linked together: composition, causality, predication. All three are articulated and related to *esse*, which is the bond and universal act[410].

From the four references to *esse*, one can gather the basic structure of Fabro's metaphysical reflection: 1) problem of the structure of *esse* and the principle of the emergence of act; 2) the demonstration of the existence of God according to the Fourth Way and determination of God's essence according to the principle of separated perfection; 3) the explanation of creation and the participative structure of created beings; and 4) the analogy of being as the semantics of participation and conclusive moment of metaphysical reflection.

Fabro's theory of analogy was assessed briefly by B. Montages in his doctoral dissertation, *La doctrine de l'analogie de l'être d'après Saint Thomas D'Aquin* (1963)[411]. Montagnes praises Fabro's interpretation of the Thomistic doctrine of analogy as follows:

> But of all the recent works devoted to the Thomist doctrine of analogy, the most satisfactory is that of C. Fabro; for he shows precisely the metaphysical import of this theory. Participation, causality, and analogy are three aspects under which philosophy approaches being – the first two, concerning the reality itself of being, the third relating to the concepts by which being is represented. Thus analogy is presented by the author as the semantics of participation[412].

In his Introduction to the work, Montagnes summarizes some of Fabro's key contributions: 1) the development of the problem of analogy as a *reductio ad unum* in light of the principles of act-potency and of participant-participated; 2) the priority of analogy of attribution (proportion) over the "formal analogy" of proportionality; and 3) the reconciliation of the two theories of analogy in the notion of participation which unites similitude and

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[410] C. FABRO, *PC*, 651.

[411] I quote from the recent English translation: B. MONTAGNES, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being according to Thomas Aquinas*, Marquette University Press, Milwaukee 2004.

[412] B. MONTAGNES, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being...*, 9.

causality[413]. Montagnes praises Fabro for bringing out the metaphysical meaning of analogy, yet laments that Fabro did not take into consideration the "progress" or evolution of St. Thomas's thought on analogy[414].

The following year (1964) Fabro published an assessment of Montagnes' work[415]. Fabro praises both the rigor of the critical method adopted by Montagnes and the results afforded by Montagnes' chronological exposition of St. Thomas's texts on analogy. In the paragraphs that follow I will summarize the contributions of Montagnes that Fabro agrees with as well as his critique of Montagnes.

One of the principal contributions of Montagnes is his presentation of the evolution he discerns in St. Thomas' thought on analogy. Since this evolution in analogy is based on a change with regard to participation, Montagnes dedicates Chapter One of his work to the notion of participation. He argues that St. Thomas's *Commentary on the Sentences* accords priority to participation by exemplarity and imitation, while later works emphasize the aspect of productive causality[416]. At the same time, the expression "participation by likeness", characteristic of St. Thomas's *Commentary on the Sentences*, unites both exemplarity and efficiency[417]. Starting with the *Summa contra Gentiles*, St. Thomas begins to conceive of participation as not only involving imperfect similitude, but also as a communication of act to a subject in potency[418]. The participated perfection by itself cannot constitute the participating subject: there is no participation of the act without a proportioned potency that can receive it. The limitation of the

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[413] See B. MONTAGNES, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being*..., 9.

[414] See B. MONTAGNES, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being*..., 10.

[415] See C. FABRO, "Nuovi orizzonti dell'analogia tomistica", *Bulletin Thomiste* 9 (1964), 193-204; reprinted in *ET*, 407-419. I will quote from *ET*.

[416] B. MONTAGNES, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being*…, 36: "Hence, in [St. Thomas's] earliest works, one cannot separate participation from imitation, nor distinguish […] analogy of imitation and analogy of participation. Both the one and the other designate the same formal relation which ties beings to God and gathers them in unity".

[417] See B. MONTAGNES, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being*…, 34-35: "The *Sentences* puts the imitation of God by created beings in the foreground and emphasizes participation by likeness; later on in Thomas the communication of being will be presented primarily as a production of created being by God's efficient causality. Of course, the texts, conforming to the axiom of likeness *omne agens agit sibi simile*, never radically separate exemplarity from efficient causality". See C. FABRO, "Nuovi orizzonti dell'analogia tomista", *ET*, 409.

[418] See *Summa contra Gentiles*, II, ch. 53; I, q. 75, a. 5 ad 4.

perfection which is participated in the subject that receives it consists not only in an imperfect likeness, but also in a composition of participated act and receptive potency: "The participated perfection is the act of the subject in potency which receives it, and it is limited to the measure of this subject. This is why the act received is indefinitely diversified according to the nature of the potency"[419]. Of St. Thomas's change from priority given to similitude to priority given to act, Montagnes concludes:

> That is why the axiom of similarity – *omne agens agit sibi simile* – is no longer the primary axiom but is connected with one still more fundamental, that of the actuality of the agent: *omne agens agit in quantum actu est*. In short, the primacy of act and the priority of efficient causality go hand in hand. Exemplarity does not disappear; it is subordinated to efficiency. In sum, participation is presented as the communication of act to a subject in potency. The act is communicated by a productive causality that assimilates the effect to the agent. The act received is limited by the potency that receives it (and gradually, sine the potency is not unique). Finally, the participating subject is composed of the act received and the receptive potency[420].

For Montagnes, the reason behind the shift in St. Thomas's thought lies in the fact that, in his *Commentary on the Sentences*, St. Thomas presents causality as the communication of a form, whereas in later works he presents causality as a communication of act[421]. Montagnes holds that the two different orientations found in St. Thomas's works imply a difference in emphasis given either to exemplarity or to efficiency. The causalities are not mutually exclusive, nor did St. Thomas first choose one over the other. "Nevertheless, though he never separated the two causalities, one has to recognize that he first puts the notion of form in the foreground and that later on the notion of act becomes fundamental[422].

After establishing the shift from participation by likeness to participation as productive causality and intrinsic possession of a perfection, Montagnes turns, in Chapter Two, to the transcendental analogy of being and, in particular, to the predication of the divine names. Montagnes discerns three different and progressive solutions to the problem: that of the *Sentences*, that of *De Veritate* and that of the later works such as *Summa contra Gentiles*, *De Potentia* and the *Summa theologiae*.

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[419] B. MONTAGNES, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being…*, 40.
[420] B. MONTAGNES, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being…*, 40.
[421] B. MONTAGNES, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being…*, 43.
[422] See B. MONTAGNES, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being…*, 43.

1) In the *Commentary on the Sentences*, St. Thomas sets aside a type of analogy that would suppose a common form unequally possessed by God and by creatures; he keeps only participation by imperfect likeness. Analogy by reference to a *primum* suffices to explain the relationship of creatures to God. Analogy by likeness expresses the imperfect likeness of creatures to their model, the dependency of creatures on God (whom they imitate) and the intrinsic possession of the participated perfection: "Transcendental perfection is an intrinsic analogy (*secundum intentionem et secundum esse*) by likeness and participation (*participare de similitudine*). By means of these complementary precisions, the theory of the unity of order can be applied under one form, to accidents and to substance, and, under another, to beings and to God; predicamental analogy relies upon a common form; transcendental analogy requires participation by likeness"[423].

2) Regarding *De Veritate*, q. 2, a. 11, Montagnes considers the text a momentary change in St. Thomas's position that was occasioned by several problematic objections. In his text, St. Thomas presents analogy under two forms: *convenientia proportionis* (which Montagnes calls "analogy of relation") and *convenientia proportionalitatis* ("analogy of proportion"). The first is defined by a determinate distance between two terms and if applied to God and creatures would end up suppressing the infinite distance that separates them. The second analogy is defined as a likeness among four terms and between their two relations (like "three is to four as six is to eight"). This second analogy "is how transcendental analogy must be conceived between beings and God: without any determinate direct relation (*nulla determinata habitudo*), but as a proportion; there is no relation of the finite to the infinite, but the relation of the finite to the finite is like the relation of the infinite to the infinite"[424]. Consequently, according to the theory of *De Veritate*, creatures do not *directly* resemble God. Rather the likeness provided by "analogy of proportion" is that of two relations that creatures and God sustain respectively with regard to certain characteristics that belong to them[425].

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[423] B. MONTAGNES, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being…*, 68-69.

[424] B. MONTAGNES, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being…*, 70.

[425] B. MONTAGNES, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being…*, 70: "In summary, predicamental analogy and transcendental analogy are treated separately as in the *Sentences*, no longer by appealing to two sorts of analogy of relation, but by applying the analogy of relation exclusively to the predicamental level and the analogy of proportion to the transcendental level. Nevertheless, the reason why analogy by reference to a primary instance is set aside from the relation of beings

3) In the later works, he comes back to analogy by reference to a primary instance and distinguishes the analogy of *duorum ad tertium* from the analogy of *unius ad alterum*. In both there is an "analogy by reference to a primary instance". In the first analogy, two secondary analogates are related to the principal analogate; in the second, the analogical denomination belongs to the secondary analogate in virtue of the direct relation that binds it to the principal analogate. Applying the second type of analogy to the transcendental level, being does not encompass both creatures (beings) and God, but rather God grounds the analogy of being, since beings receive by participation what God is by his essence[426]. Analogy by reference to a primary instance explains both the relation of accidents to substance (predicamental level) and the relation of creatures to God (transcendental level).

After summarizing these solutions, Montagnes looks in-depth at the four problems addressed by *De Veritate* but solved in later works.

[1] The first problem is that there is no likeness of beings to God in virtue of a common form received *secundum magis et minus*. *De Veritate* rejects direct likeness and substitutes it with proportional likeness. Later works hold that the likeness of beings to God does not depend upon participation of a common form and that the form participated by the creature is not identical to the divine perfection. Divine perfection is communicated only in a deficient way and this prevents "univocity while laying the foundation for the analogy of relation: what God is by essence, beings receive by participation"[427].

[2] The second problem holds that between the finite and the infinite there is no direct determinate relation. *De Veritate* holds that there is not "*proportio*" between the finite and infinite, but rather

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to God does no longer lie, as it was in the *Sentences*, merely in the fact that being would be prior to and simpler than God, but rather in the fact that such an analogy involves a direct relationship to the primary instance; Thomas believes that, by admitting a relation of this sort, one can no longer safeguard the divine transcendence. Without saying it, Thomas thus adopts a new position which contradicts what he had held in the *Sentences*, since he eliminates participation by likeness; for analogy by imitation he substitutes analogy of proportion. At the transcendental level, the analogy of relation is useless, because it would diminish the distance that separates beings from God". See C. FABRO, "Nuovi orizzonti dell'analogia tomista", *ET*, 412.

[426] B. MONTAGNES, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being…*, 71.

[427] B. MONTAGNES, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being…*, 75.

"*proportionalitas*". In later works, St. Thomas recognizes that there is a direct relation between beings and God, which is established by efficient causality: "*potest esse proportio creaturae ad Deum, in quantum se habet ad ipsum ut effectus ad causam*"[428].

[3] Thirdly, *De Veritate* proposes that: "Between beings and God there is an infinite distance which would be diminished by the analogy of relation but which might be preserved by the analogy of proportion"[429]. Later works recognize that God is immanent to all beings not as form, but as cause and that the metaphor of "distance" is an expression of dissimilarity[430].

[4] Lastly, *De Veritate* attempts to remove both types of analogy of relation (found in the *Sentences*). In later works, the analogates are defined by the primary instance: "The causal dependence on God creates the relation necessary for analogy by reference to a primary instance without risk of confounding beings and God in one and the same form or notion"[431].

In light of these four problems, Montagnes concludes that there are two notable changes in St. Thomas's doctrine of "transcendental analogy": first, being is no longer conceived as form, but rather as act; second, causality is no longer seen as the likeness of the copy to a model, but as the dependence of one being upon another being which produces it. Hence, "it is by a veritable communication of being that God produces creatures and creative causality establishes between beings and God the indispensable bond of participation so that there might be an analogy of relation between them. It will no longer be necessary to have recourse to analogy of proportion, and Thomas will never come back to the theory of *De Veritate*"[432].

Up to this point, Fabro shows that he agrees substantially with Montagnes' presentation of the evolution of St. Thomas' doctrine of analogy. The key point on which Fabro and Montagnes differ involves the role of analogy of proportionality (Montagnes: "analogy of proportion"). Montagnes, Fabro writes, is uncertain about the role of the analogy of proportionality, which, according to Fabro, is indispensible in the

[428] I, q. 12, a. 1 ad 4.
[429] B. MONTAGNES, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being*…, 75.
[430] See I, q. 8, a. 1 ad 3.
[431] B. MONTAGNES, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being*…, 77.
[432] B. MONTAGNES, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being*…, 78.

expression of the logical moment of analogy and is subordinate to the "analogy of order". Fabro holds that this secondary (metaphysical-logical) analogy of proportionality is able to be expressed as follows: as, in the infinitely perfect being, infinite *esse* belongs to the infinite essence and is identical to it, so in imperfect being, finite *esse* or *actus essendi* belongs to the finite essence as is really distinct from it[433].

Fabro is more critical of Montagnes' consideration of the role of the essence in created *ens*. Montagnes argues that in the reduction of formal multiplicity to unity, essences must be considered in their relation to being as the modes and degrees of the perfection of being: "they are such first and foremost not as receptive potency but primarily as formal determination of the act of being". Montagnes avoids emphasizing the essence's negative function of limitation and focuses on the essence's positive function of specification. The essence does not receive this positive value from the act of being, yet it exercises the specification only by the act of being. The essence determines *esse* by specifying it and limits *esse* by receiving it: Essence is defined by its positive value of formal determination, but it can perform this formal determination only by the actuation of *esse*. In turn, *esse* does not confer upon the essence its formal determination, but gives it the wherewithal to exercise it really. Essence should not be reduced to mere potency and limit. "In sum, there are degrees of being because the perfection of being is measured by the essences according to their formal determination and limited by them according to their receptive capacity"[434].

Montagnes takes up this point about the role of essence in the Conclusion. In it, Montagnes raises several fundamental, metaphysical questions which, Fabro points out, he also leaves unresolved. Montagnes proposes that in light of the specification of *esse* by the essence, it is impossible to assign all perfection to *esse* and reserve all imperfection to essence[435].

Fabro's critique of Montagnes' questions regarding the role of the essence in created *ens* is threefold. First, according to Fabro, Montagnes does not seem to come to a "*resolutio ad principia*"[436]: namely, Montagnes tends to conceive *esse* as *actus essentiae* or as *essentia in actu* and is uncertain about the "nature" of the real distinction between essence and *esse* and, in general, about the relationship between participation, composition

[433] See C. FABRO, "Nuovi orizzonti dell'analogia tomistica", *ET*, 416.
[434] B. MONTAGNES, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being…*, 88.
[435] See B. MONTAGNES, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being…*, 160-161.
[436] See C. FABRO, "Nuovi orizzonti dell'analogia tomistica", *ET*, 415.

and limitation in the Thomistic synthesis[437]. Montagnes' questions seem to admit a limitation of act *per se* in virtue of a "principle of degrees" or the attribution of *perfectio essendi* to the essence, which would reduce *esse* to an *actuatio essentiae* or would conceive *esse* as *existentia* or *positio rei extra causas*[438].

Second, Fabro also doesn't see why Montagnes raises the question about "limitation" being explained by composition. For Fabro, metaphysics primarily seeks to found being [*être*] and not the essence, which is presupposed according to a derivation of exemplarity in the proper hierarchy of perfection[439].

Third, in his Conclusion, Montagnes outlines several important problems: the origin of the notion of *ens*, the relationship between essence and *esse*, the meaning of the Thomistic expression "*natura essendi*", the relationship of *perfectio essendi* to *esse commune* and *esse divinum* and so on; yet Montagnes is content to pose questions instead of give clear answers[440].

In his evaluation, Fabro agrees with Montagnes that the created essences are positive perfections and express – insofar as they are different participations of *esse* – degrees and modes of perfection of being. Furthermore, *esse* is not only received by the essence, but also specified by it. This specification, however (and here lies another difference between Fabro and Montagnes), occurs in the formal order – with respect to the content of being – and not in the order of reality[441]. For Fabro, the *esse in actu* of *ens* comes from *esse* and not from the essence. In light of this, Fabro finds the following conclusion of Montagnes confusing and perplexing:

> The unity of order which gathers beings [*les êtres*] together is based both upon the real unity of that which is perfection, which is *Ipsum esse*, and upon the intrinsic communication of its perfection to the participants. The real composition of the latter is not ruled out, since there is no limitation without composition, but it is subordinated, since composition is the necessary but not sufficient condition of limitation. Created beings are similar to divine being in virtue of the relations of efficient and formal causality and the sum of those

[437] See C. FABRO, "Nuovi orizzonti dell'analogia tomistica", *ET*, 416.
[438] See C. FABRO, "Nuovi orizzonti dell'analogia tomistica", *ET*, 418.
[439] See C. FABRO, "Nuovi orizzonti dell'analogia tomistica", *ET*, 417.
[440] See C. FABRO, "Nuovi orizzonti dell'analogia tomistica", *ET*, 417.
[441] See C. FABRO, "Nuovi orizzonti dell'analogia tomistica", *ET*, 418: "Mais cette spécification intervient dans la ligne formelle, ou par rapporta u *contenu* de l'être et non dans l'ordre de la réalité".

> relations constitutes participation. It is therefore no longer necessary to base similarity upon simple proportional relations[442].

Fabro holds that this text shows that Montagnes does not grasp *esse* as emergent act. Fabro accuses Montagnes of the same fault he finds in Geiger: ambiguity concerning the notion of *esse* as *actus essendi*, the principle of the limitation of act by potency and the "nature" of the real distinction between essence and *esse*.

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In synthesis, Fabro's term "intensive *esse*" refers above all to *esse* as "act of all acts" and "perfection of all perfections". It is a versatile term in that it refers to *esse* as the formal, intensive plexus of all perfections, as the creature's participated *actus essendi*, and the very essence of God: *Ipsum Esse Subsistens*. The analogy between created *esse* and divine *esse* is not many-to-one, but rather one-to-another, in that divine *esse* and created *esse* are not just two different realizations of the same perfection (as if *esse* were a genus prior to God). "Intensive *esse*" can refer to the creature's participated *actus essendi*, which, insofar as it is the first and ultimate act of the creature, is the principle which actuates every other form, perfection and act in the created substance.

Accordingly, in Fabro's interpretation of St. Thomas, *subsistentia* and *esse accidentale* are merely the *esse-in-actu* of substance and accidents and not ulterior, super-added perfections or constitutive principles. Subsistence is conferred to the substantial essence by *actus essendi* and is not a third component of *ens*. The accidental form, according to its effective reality, is added to the formal act of the substance (and, in this sense, is a new *esse-in-actu* or *esse superadditum* which inheres in the substance), yet, when considered as a degree of intensity of being, the accidental form is a secondary measure, which confers a new mode of being to *ens* within the limits established by the primary measure of the substantial quiddity. "In this perspective, the originary act to which the accident owes its derived actuality is the same as that of the substance, and is for this reason the unique *actus essendi* of the *suppositum*"[443]. Based on Fabro's interpretation, accidental *esse* may be considered in two ways. Contat summarizes: "Seen 'from below', the accident is an inherent form in act in its subject, which is,

[442] B. MONTAGNES, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being…*, 161.
[443] A. CONTAT, "Le figure della differenza ontologica…", 245.

in turn, in act: there are two levels of *esse in actu* in the concrete *suppositum*, that of the substance, and that super-added of each individual accident. Seen 'from above', the accident is a form that is posterior to the substantial form, which gives the unique *actus essendi* an added intensity and specification to that of the essence, but is subordinated to it"[444].

[444] A. CONTAT, "Le figure della differenza ontologica…", 245-246.

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation I proposed the somewhat ambitious goal of setting out Fabro's theory of the method and structure of metaphysical reflection in its entirety, tracing its evolution and assessing some of its key elements. We have seen that Fabro proposes resolution-reduction as the proper method of metaphysics or "metaphysical reflection". This method involves a resolution-reduction of *ens* to *esse* according to the notion of participation and the couplet of act-potency. The *metaphysical* resolution-reduction of *ens* presupposes three things: an initial knowledge of *ens* at the dawn of knowing, a phenomenological stage of reflection on reality, and a philosophical stage of reflection on the principles of movement (accidental and substantial) and multiplicity (accidental, specific and generic). The resolution-reduction proper to metaphysics begins with reflection on *ens qua ens* and ultimately seeks to found the creature's real composition of essence and *actus essendi* on God as *Ipsum Esse Subsistens* and as the ultimate, extrinsic cause of all created being.

In general, Fabro uses the term "*resolutio*" to refer to the movement of reason in metaphysics from the initial notion of *ens* to the "intensive notion" of *esse*. Fabro's theory of resolution draws out an important relationship between our initial, implicit, confused apprehension of *esse* within *ens* and our mature, metaphysical knowledge of *esse* at the end of metaphysical reflection. As Alain Contat points out, Fabro's resolution itinerary from *ens* to *esse* comprehends three stages: there is an initial resolution of *ens* to "*esse commune*", a subsequent resolution of *ens* to its constitutive principles of *essentia* and *esse*, and a third resolution of *ens* into *Ipsum Esse Subsistens* (God) and *ens per participationem* (creatures)[1]. In Fabro's theory of resolution, the notion of participation plays a key role, for it has the advantage of expressing both the compositional structure of created *ens* (static-structural participation) and the causal dependence of created *ens* on God (dynamic-causal participation). The creature's participated *actus essendi* is ultimately founded on God as Creator according to the three speculative principles of the Fourth Way (emergence of act; separated

[1] See A. CONTAT, "Le figure della differenza ontologica…", 119-120.

perfection; participation) and St. Thomas's doctrine of creation. According to Fabro, the conclusive moment of metaphysical reflection belongs to the analogy of being as the ultimate semantic expression of structural and causal participation.

The basic "structure" of Fabro's metaphysical reflection is articulated in accordance with the dynamic of the method of resolution-reduction and hinges on the progressive "determination" of *ens-esse*. The five principal stages in this determination are as follows.

First, metaphysical reflection presupposes an initial notion of *ens* common to all men: *ens* as *primum cognitum*. *Ens* is apprehended, not abstracted, as a synthetic notion which implicitly includes both essence and *esse*.

Second, phenomenological reflection on reality, substance and causality provides the basis for subsequent philosophical distinctions. This reflection affirms the unity of substance as both subject and essence; that the notion proper to causality is that of dependence, and that essence (obtained by abstraction) is irreducible to existence (affirmed in a judgment).

Third, philosophical admiration urges us on to begin a reflection on the problem of movement, change and multiplicity. Accidental change and accidental multiplicity are explained by means of the distinction between substance and accidents and between potency and act. Substantial change (generation and corruption) is explained by the distinction between prime matter and substantial form. The notion of univocal-predicamental, formal-notional participation is used to explain the participation of an individual in a species and the species in a genus. Metaphysical reflection properly begins when the philosopher comes to an initial, *metaphysical* notion of *ens-esse*. According to Fabro, this notion is obtained by surpassing the problem of movement and reflecting on the varying degrees of perfection in the beings that surround us. In this way, the philosopher passes from the problem of physical contrariety to that of metaphysical contrariety. Physical contrariety concerns the *opposition* of the terms of movement; metaphysical contrariety concerns the *distinction* between degrees of perfection.

In the passage from the initial, metaphysical notion of *ens-esse* to the "intensive notion" of *esse*, there is an intermediate stage to which a "methodological-structural notion" of *ens-esse* is proper. In this intermediate stage, two important problems are affronted: the first concerns the argument for the real composition of essence and *esse* in the created substance; the second concerns the problem of predicamental causality and the causal role of form in the created substance. In the solution to the first, the created substance is seen to "participate" in *actus essendi*, which, in

turn, is limited and determined by the form or essence as potency-principle. Thus, the principles "*forma dat esse*" and "*forma est causa essendi*" are interpreted to mean that the form exercises a "formal causality" (determination, limitation), and not an efficient causality (production of act; reduction of potency to act) on *actus essendi*. Both the problems – that of the real composition and that of form's causal influence on *esse* – lead to that of transcendental causality.

Proper to the fourth stage of metaphysical reflection, is Fabro's twofold resolution based on the distinction he makes between formal resolution-reduction and real resolution-reduction: the former concerns the creature's essence and the participation of pure perfections (*vivere et intelligere*) in *esse*; the latter concerns the real, constitutive principles of created *ens* and the foundation of the creature's participated *actus essendi*. The former ends in the formal, intensive notion of *esse ipsum* as formal plexus of all perfections; the latter ends in the understanding of created, participated *esse* in its causal relationship to *Ipsum Esse Subsistens*. Thus, it is in the final (fifth) stage of metaphysical reflection that the ultimate, analogical, intensive notion of *esse* is obtained.

Before summarizing the results of each chapter of the dissertation, I would like to point out four factors which seem to have hindered a proper understanding and appraisal of Fabro's proposal: first, the sheer vastness of Fabro's metaphysical production; second, the evolution of Fabro's metaphysical terminology; third, Fabro's habit of integrating historical references and interpretations in his more systematic expositions; and, lastly, Fabro's style of exposition, which favors sweeping syntheses and continual allusions to classical and contemporary thought over more detailed analyses and structured presentations. In this dissertation, I have sought to overcome the first difficulty by means of a synthetic exposition that encompasses the majority of Fabro's metaphysical works. I addressed the second factor by tracing the evolution of Fabro's thought in a chronological exposition of his texts. Throughout the dissertation, I have sought to clarify the evolution and meaning of important Fabrian terms, such as "*Diremtion*", "emergence", "intensive", "dialectic" and "synopsis". I have also clarified the evolution of Fabro's thought on our initial apprehension of *ens* and our progressive knowledge of *esse*. I addressed the third factor by gleaning and ordering Fabro's historical references into an introductory chapter, which, in turn, establishes an essential point of reference for the reader and a contextualization of Fabro's interpretation by pointing out several hermeneutical keys at work in his interpretation. Lastly, I attenuated some of the style difficulties by structuring Fabro's proposal in

Chapter Seven in accordance with the indications scattered throughout his works.

The principal results of my investigation on Fabro's method and structure of metaphysical reflection are as follows.

In Chapter One, "Fabro's Interpretation of the History of Metaphysics", I distinguished three methods at work in Fabro's interpretation: the historical-critical, the critical-speculative, and the speculative-creative. In his work, Fabro privileges the critical-speculative method as it allows him to compare and contrast the various proposals made throughout history at the level of speculative principles. The critical-speculative method, however, presupposes the historical-critical method. We saw that part of Fabro's merit lies in his establishing the nucleus of St. Thomas's original, "emergent synthesis" of Platonic, Aristotelian, Patristic and Islamic thought. In contrast to the then-current interpretation of an Aristotelian Thomism (early twentieth-century Thomism), Fabro highlighted the Platonic elements of St. Thomas's metaphysics and argued that Thomistic metaphysics is neither Aristotelian to the exclusion of the Platonic, nor Platonic to the exclusion of the Aristotelian. St. Thomas's "emergent synthesis" was described by Fabro in terms of a "methodological emergence" (in *NMP*) and as an *Aufhebung* (in later works). Fabro shows that St. Thomas effectively synthesizes the Platonic principles of transcendence, exemplarity, participation, separated perfection, and the formal priority of *esse* with the Aristotelian principles of immanent form, composition, causality, the analogical notions of act-potency and the emergence of act.

Also meritorious are the connections Fabro draws out between the Scholastic and Kantian notions of "existence" and the confrontation he undertakes between Hegel – Heidegger – Aquinas. We saw that Fabro continually draws attention to a *methodological convergence* between the three philosophers and how each gives importance to *Sein* (*esse*) as well as to their *doctrinal divergence* regarding the ultimate foundation.

As I pointed out in the Introduction, an in-depth, critical assessment of Fabro's interpretation is neither the goal of this dissertation, nor possible within the limits I set. Chapter One is of an introductory nature and seeks only to provide a reference point for the reader. To this end, I sought, in my presentation of Fabro's work on the history of metaphysics, to uncover some of the "hermeneutical keys" at work in his interpretation and, in this way, contextualize Fabro's interpretation. In my opinion, Fabro's interpretation of the history of metaphysics has at least one major drawback connected to a limit inherent to a Heideggerian reading of the history of

metaphysics. Heidegger's fundamental insight of a "forgetfulness" of being after the enigmatic Parmenides – even if modified to include a second "forgetfulness" after Aquinas – seems incapable of accounting for the progress made by Plato and Aristotle in metaphysics, the notion of *esse* in Neo-Platonic thought, the advances made by Christian, Islamic and Jewish thinkers, as well as the cultural context and immediate influences on St. Thomas's work (William of Auvergne and St. Albert the Great). In light of this, I questioned the striking contrast between the benignity Fabro extends to Parmenides and the critical stance Fabro takes towards Aristotle in his adoption of the thesis that identifies Aristotelian act and form. I would argue for a more "open" interpretation of Aristotle, like that undertaken by St. Thomas himself; as well, a greater appreciation for the Aristotelian notion of act is warranted and to be preferred.

Although I am critical of the influence of Heideggerian elements in Fabro's reading of the history of metaphysics, I also believe that Fabro's attempt to engage in a dialogue with Heidegger's reading of the history of metaphysics is partly justified by the historical context and milieu of his work. With regard to the historical context, we see that Fabro attempted to dialogue with contemporary thinkers and he saw Heidegger's work as a golden opportunity to initiate such a "dialogue". Fabro by no means falls into the temptation of trying to fuse Heidegger with St. Thomas or to correct St. Thomas by means of Heidegger. Fabro always maintained the thesis of a methodological convergence and doctrinal divergence between the two.

In the conclusion to Chapter One, I pointed out that Fabro's attention to the history of metaphysics enabled him to discern more clearly the fundamental problems that metaphysics should resolve: the problem of the beginning of knowledge and our knowledge of *esse*; the problem of act and the relationship between form and *esse*; the problem of the relationship between degrees of perfection and *esse*; the problem of the distinction between *actus essendi*, *existentia*, *subsistentia*, and *inesse*; and the problem of the relationship between created being and God. Evidently, all of these problems revolve around the fundamental problem of *esse*.

In Chapter Two, "The Dialectic of Participation", I expounded the content of Fabro's first metaphysical works on the principle of causality, the notion of participation, the real distinction of essence and *esse*, and the relationship between phenomenology and metaphysics. Fabro's insights into the role of participation in the ultimate formulation of the principle of causality remain an important milestone in twentieth-century Thomistic thought. These insights led him to develop the distinction between predicamental-univocal participation and transcendental-analogous

participation, as well as the distinction between the notion of participation as considered in static-structural problems and in dynamic-causal problems.

In his work on the principle of causality, Fabro sought a novel solution to a vexing problem: founding the principle of causality on the notion of participation. In this way Fabro moves shifts the question from how the principle of causality is logically founded on the principle of non-contradiction to which formulation of the principle of causality is most universal and also evident *per se*. Fabro identifies this formula in St. Thomas's I, q. 44, a. 1 ad 2 and other texts. Fabro's position has been criticized by Sanmarchi who holds that Fabro does not distinguish properly between the principle of causality used in the proof for God's existence and the ultimate understanding of causality in the light of the doctrine of creation. For his part, Owens critiques Fabro's position as it does not respond to the question of the principle of causality as a first principle of the mind. While these critiques are valid in some respects, they can be attenuated by highlighting that Fabro recognizes that there is a difference between an initial, confused notion of participation and a mature, notion of participation at the end of the course of metaphysical reflection and by highlighting that Fabro is not looking for a first principle with the participation formula of the principle of causality, but rather a universal, *per se* proposition.

In *NMP* (1939) Fabro develops his theory of "intensive metaphysical abstraction". This "abstraction" consists in a dialectical comparison between form and the act of being and is said to end in the "*ratio* of being" (*ragione d'essere*). In the section on predicamental participation, Fabro speaks of this dialectic as a "dialectical ascension" from the individual's participation in a species and the species' participation in its genus to their foundation on the real composition of form and matter in material substances. In this way, Fabro establishes a "proportional correspondence" between the formal-notional participations (individual-species and species-genus) and the real, predicamental participations (substance-accidents and matter-form). Metaphysical reflection properly begins when a passage is made from the problem of movement and physical contrariety to the problem of being and metaphysical contrariety. The metaphysical contrariety of the varying degrees of perfection is ultimately founded on participation in *esse* in an ulterior stage of metaphysical reflection.

At the level of transcendental participation, Fabro distinguishes two lines of reflection in *NMP*: one line is called a "formal resolution of essence" and reflects on participated perfection, the other is more concrete in nature and reflects on *esse* as *actus essendi*. "Formal resolution" is said to

end in "formal *esse*" as plexus of all formal and transcendental perfections and the latter in *Ipsum Esse Subsistens*, since every formality is, in some way, a participation of the divine splendor[2]. Fabro affirms that we are not dealing with two notions of intensive *esse*, but rather with one. Over time, this theory is gradually modified and no longer considered within a Scholastic *esse essentiae – esse existentiae* framework. In later works, Fabro does not always clarify the meaning of *ipsum esse*, often leaving the reader to determine if he is referring to "formal, intensive *esse*", the creature's participated *actus essendi* or God as *Ipsum Esse Subsistens*.

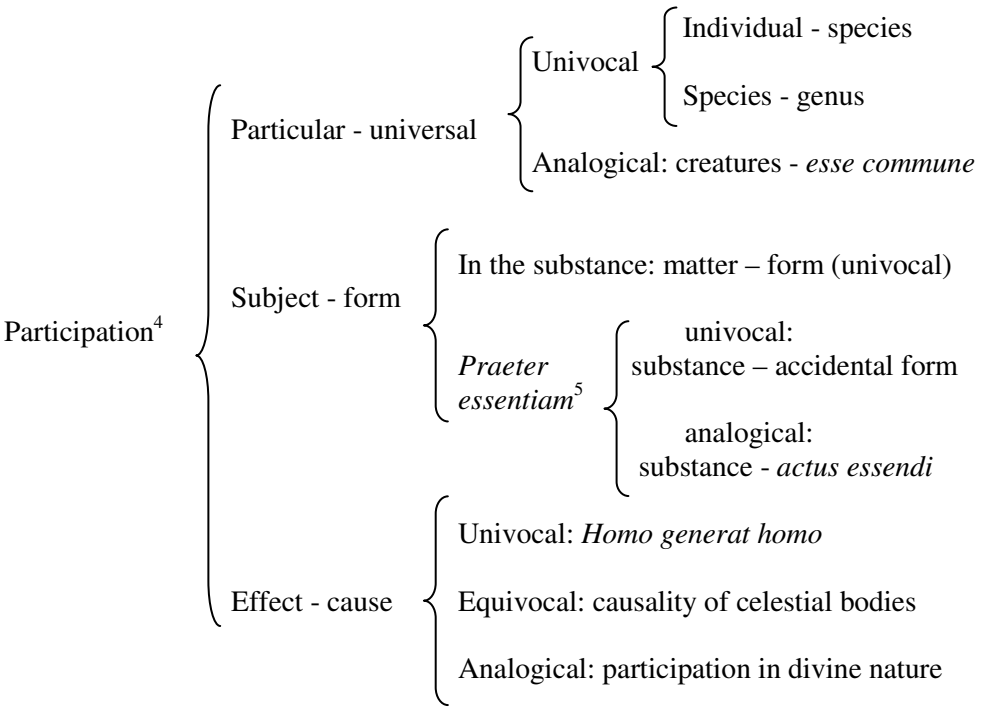
Undoubtedly, Fabro ought to be praised for his pioneering work on St. Thomas's notion of predicamental-univocal participation and on the interplay between phenomenology and metaphysics. Also noteworthy is his untiring defense of the real distinction between essence and *esse* in created *ens*. Some limits in these initial works include the following. First, Fabro's Neo-Scholastic terminology makes it difficult to understand his proposal and the continuity of his thought with later works: for example, using the term "metaphysical *abstraction*", "existence" instead of *esse*, the Scholastic distinction between *esse essentiae* and *esse existentiae*, and the term "*ragione d'essere*" (even in the updated versions of 1950 and 1963).

Secondly, it seems to me that the entire question of a foundation or formulation of the principle of causality needs to be considered anew and apart from the rationalistic influence present in early Neo-Scholastic thought. Fabro's attempt at a foundation of the "principle of causality" clearly shifts from a logical-gnoseological perspective (reduction to the principle of non-contradiction) to a metaphysical perspective (composition and causal dependence in terms of participation).

Thirdly, there are some texts of St. Thomas that Fabro holds clearly distinguish predicamental participation from transcendental participation, but which, in fact, do not make such a distinction. For example, Fabro argues that his distinction parallels that of *Quodlibet.* II, q. 2, a. 2, which distinguishes between participation "within the substance" and participation in something *praeter* the essence. Technically, the participation of the substance in its accidental forms (which Fabro calls "predicamental participation") would fall under the latter and not the former. Another example is *In De Hebdomadibus*, lect. 2, which distinguishes three "modes" of participation. Fabro's distinction, on the other hand, places the first two modes under predicamental participation, and splits the third into predicamental causality and transcendental causality. A more systematic

[2] See C. FABRO, *NMP*, 198-199.

exposition of predicamental participation in *NMP* seems necessary. Fabro's proposal would possibly have been more readily accepted had such a systematic exposition been presented. Still lacking, then, is a chronological reading and a "contextualized reading"[3] of St. Thomas's texts on participation. In my opinion, St. Thomas's division of (metaphysical) participation, based on the texts Fabro often refers to, looks more like this:



Obviously, this division does not contemplate "supernatural participations" like grace as a participation in the divine nature the priest's participation in Christ's eternal priesthood or our participation in eternal heavenly liturgy through the celebration of the mystery of salvation in the sacraments.

[3] By "contextualized reading" I mean an interpretation that takes into consideration the nature of the work quoted and the problem the text addresses. Is the text a "synthetic text" from a *Summa*? Is it a "commentary" which modifies the meaning of the original text or offers an interpretation that goes beyond the text at hand? Is it a "*Questiones disputatae*", where St. Thomas often adopts a more speculative and technical approach?

[4] See *In Boethii De Hebdomadibus*, lect. 2.

[5] See *Quodlibet*. II, q. 2, a. 2

In Chapter Three, "The Resolution of *Ens*", we saw that Fabro's *Metaphysica* (1948-1949) provides a Thomistic foundation for his use of *resolutio* as method of metaphysics (*In Boethii De Trinitate*, q. 6, a. 1) and outlines a *resolutio* (or dialectical reduction) from the first distinction of *ens* into substance and accidents to the argument for the real distinction of essence and *esse* based on the notion of participation. Fabro's thought at this point is mature and can be seen in his balanced presentation of certain themes, such as the question of the relationship between *subsistentia*, *inesse* and *esse* and the analogical predication of being. Another important work in this period was his 1954 article on the Fourth Way. The article places the principles of the Fourth Way as the structure of the latter stages of metaphysical reflection the center of metaphysical reflection and outlines a progressive knowledge of *esse* according to the principles of the emergence of act, separated perfection and participation (both dynamic and structural). During this period, Fabro again outlines his distinction between the *formal* resolution-reduction of *esse* and the *real* resolution-reduction of *esse*.

Regarding some of the limits of these works, I noted how Book Three of *Metaphysica* on causality, the transcendentals and analogy leaves aside the method of resolution and follows a more expositive, static approach to the three problems. Secondly, the speculative convergence that Fabro notes in the arguments similar to the Fourth Way between the demonstration of the existence of God, the demonstration of creation and the argument for the real distinction needs to be balanced by a "pedagogical approach" which, Fabro himself notes, adequately distinguishes the problems and stages in their respective solutions. Such an approach, in my opinion, would lead to a greater appreciation for the other four Ways (which are based on efficient and final causality) and for the role of efficient, exemplary and final causality in the problem of creation. It would also distinguish the ways by means of which we can come to know the real distinction before proving God's existence and the *propter quid* argument which proves the real distinction based on the uniqueness of God's being.

In Chapter Four, "The Emergence of *Esse*" I looked at Fabro's texts in *Partecipazione e causalità* on *resolutio* as the proper method of metaphysics, his critique of judgment as the means by which we come to know *actus essendi*, his interpretation of causal role of form, his texts on the problem of the derivation of created essence and created *esse*, and, finally, his proposal regarding the principles of St. Thomas's thought on analogy.

In *PC*, metaphysical *resolutio* is outlined according to three notions of *ens-esse*: there is a passage from an initial notion of *ens* to a methodological notion of *ens* as *id quod habet esse*, and from this notion to the

determination of *esse* as ultimate transcendental act and immediate object of divine causality. A threefold resolution of act is outlined: from multiple and superficial acts (accidents) one passes to more constant acts (substantial form) and from these to the ultimate and first act: *esse*. These passages are not demonstrations or intuitions, but rather steps proper to a "process of foundation". Metaphysical *resolutio* is thus conceived of as a reduction of *ens* to *esse*, which is ultimately clarified in the metaphysical distinction between *ens per participationem* and *Ipsum Esse Subsistens*.

In his work on the causal relationship between form and *esse* Fabro determines that form is formal, and not effective, principle of *esse*, meaning that form provides the formal, constitutive act of the essence to a substance. Participated *esse* is thus causally dependent on form insofar as, by the form, the substance is made the proper recipient of *esse*. Form, in turn, as actuated act, is dependent on *esse*, which is the actuating act that has God as its efficient, final and exemplary cause. In this way, the two causal planes – the predicamental and the transcendental – correspond to one other.

Fabro's theory on the derivation of the principles of created *ens* is as follows: the created essences are derived from the divine essence through the intermediary of the divine Ideas. This derivation is a formal derivation that occurs according to the relation of exemplary causality. Every essence, thought act in the formal order, is created as potency and is actuated by participated *actus essendi*. The essence "receives" *actus essendi*, yet its very actuality is "mediated" by *actus essendi*. In this way, *actus essendi* is the proper terminus of God's transcendental causality and is intrinsically dependent on God.

For Fabro, the analogy of being is the conclusive moment of metaphysical reflection. In *PC*, Fabro is only concerned with the principles and foundation of St. Thomas's theory of analogy and does not pretend to develop an exhaustive treatise. Nevertheless, Fabro's thought on analogy is a constant point of reference for other Thomists. In essence, Fabro discerns two principal types of metaphysical analogy: 1) the analogy of proportionality which entails a comparison of four terms and two proportions – this analogy is geared toward bringing out the similarities between the analogues and focuses on the structure of being; and 2) the analogy of (intrinsic) attribution which entails at least two terms, one of which is the principal and foundation for the other – analogy of attribution emphasizes the causal dependence of one analogue on the other. According to Fabro, both analogies are able to be employed at the predicamental and transcendental levels. In accordance with his interpretation of Thomistic

participation, the analogy of attribution is given a certain primacy, insofar as it is foundational, over the analogy of proportionality.

One of the limits I found in *PC* concerns the rearrangement of the text in the Italian version. The rearrangement masks somewhat the logical structure of the original French version. For example, the impressive build-up in the section on transcendental causality – in the French version – to the problem of divine motion is lost in the Italian version. Another limit concerns the style of Fabro's exposition in *PC*: some parts are very repetitive and seem to reflect the original "lecture format" of work; the intertwining of historical references in the more systematic parts on predicamental causality, transcendental causality and the analogy of being, also make *PC* difficult to understand and interpret correctly. Many times, Fabro prefers to quote extensively from St. Thomas and present a number of texts in order to confirm his reading, rather than analyze the texts and make them more accessible to his readers. I hope that by having presented Fabro's metaphysical thought in *PC* in accordance with divisions of the text proper to the original French version, I have brought greater clarity to the interplay between predicamental and transcendental causality.

In Chapter Five, "The Reduction to Fundament", I traced the development of Fabro's metaphysical thought from 1960 to the 1990s. Most of the articles and works deal with one of four themes: the foundational role of *ens* as *primum cognitum*; the methodological convergence–doctrinal divergence between the thought of Hegel, Heidegger and St. Thomas on being and the reduction to fundament; the emergence of *esse ut actus* over all other acts and perfection; and the notion of participation. Resolution and reduction are constantly mentioned as the method of Thomistic metaphysics and, at times, are introduced by means of a confrontation of St. Thomas's thought with that of Hegel and Heidegger. Throughout these years, Fabro was practically the only Thomist to draw attention to *resolutio* as the proper method of Thomistic metaphysics.

In Chapter Six, "The Method of Metaphysical Reflection", I first established nucleus of Fabro's thought on resolution-reduction as the proper method of metaphysics. Fabro's use of *resolutio* is based on *In Boethii De Trinitate*, q. 6, a. 1, yet does not distinguish explicitly *resolutio secundum rationem* and *resolutio secundum rem*. Both Romera and Contat highlighted Fabro's use of a twofold resolution to "intensive *esse*": the formal resolution of participated participation which ends in the intensive (formal) notion of *esse*; the real resolution-reduction of act which ends in the intensive notion of *esse* as *actus essendi* and God as *Ipsum Esse Subsistens*. Throughout, the

analogy of being (especially the analogy of attribution) is involved in the *reductio ad unum* characteristic of metaphysical reflection.

Some points which can be developed further in Fabro's theory of resolution include: the contextualization of *resolutio* within the *intellectus-ratio-intellectus* dynamic proper to human understanding; the distinction between *resolutio secundum rationem* and *resolutio secundum rem*; the distinction between logical resolution and metaphysical resolution; the relationship between *resolutio* and the transcendentals; and a resolutive analysis of the triadic structure of creation according to efficient, exemplary and final causality.

In Chapter Seven, I established the basic "structure" of Fabro's metaphysical reflection. I began with a summary and assessment of Fabro's thought on *ens* as *primum cognitum* (1). Fabro certainly has the merit of emphasizing the non-abstractive character of our first notion and of arguing that this *primum cognitum* is best characterized as being obtained through an apprehension. At the same time, I concurred with L. Romera that the gnoseological nature of the *primum cognitum* is underdeveloped in Fabro's theory and that there is a need to investigate further into the theory of *ens* as *primum cognitum* as an intellectual *habitus* present in every intellectual act of knowledge.

After summarizing the phenomenological and initial philosophical stages of reflection on reality and movement, I looked at Fabro's position on the constitution of the *genus subiectum* of metaphysics (2.2). What Fabro proposes is very similar to J. Aertsen's theory: the *genus subiectum* of metaphysics is not constituted through a negative judgment on the separability or materiality of being, but rather by means of a continual analysis of mobile being (Aertsen) or of the principles of movement (Fabro).

I then looked at the different interpretations of Fabro's writings on the arguments for the real distinction between essence and *esse* (3.1) and concluded that, although it is not very clear, Fabro seems to allow for an initial *quia* demonstration of the distinction between essence and *esse* in finite beings, yet prefers to emphasize the fact that our ultimate knowledge of the real distinction is based on the notion of participation and speculatively coincides with the principles of the Fourth Way and the demonstration of creation. Contat and Pangallo distinguish between two types of arguments for the real distinction and characterize the latter argument as Fabro's *propter quid* argument for the real distinction.

As mentioned earlier, one of the keys to understand Fabro's proposal is the distinction between formal and real resolution. Fabro bases the

distinction on St. Thomas's commentary on Dionysius's *De Divinis Nominibus*, V. To my knowledge, Fabro did not explain the distinction itself in-depth, but rather affirmed the distinction and developed the two lines of resolution. In the first resolution, we are not dealing specifically with constitutive principles of created *ens*. The resolution culminates in a dialectical reflection on the relationship between *esse, vivere* and *intelligere*: "Whatever participates in *vivere* first participates in *esse*" (*esse* appears as foundation); "Something participates in *intelligere* to the degree that it participates in *esse*" ("intensive" notion of *esse*). In contrasting "formal resolution" with "real resolution", Fabro is not contrasting the "irreal" with the "real", but rather isolating the participations proper to the species, the genus and to the perfections "*vivere*", and "*intelligere*" from the participations proper to accidents, substance, matter, substantial form, essence and *esse*.

In Chapter Seven, I proposed that Fabro's real resolution (of act) can be articulated according to the three principles he outlines in the argument for the real distinction and the argument for the existence of God (4.2). In the section on dynamic, causal participation (4.2.3.1) I was able to confront Fabro's theory of participation and creation with the work of several other eminent Thomists. I concluded that Fabro's theory (mediated, formal derivation of created essence according to a relation of exemplar cause; participated *actus essendi* as the immediate and proper terminus of God's transcendental causality) can be improved upon by incorporating Wippel's threefold distinction between participation in *esse commune*, participation in *actus essendi* and participation in *esse divinum*; by incorporating Doolan's work on exemplary causality and participation; and by taking into consideration the chapters on final causality and participation from Artola's work. Artola's distinction between imitation of the divine nature and adequation to the divine exemplars could also be a venue for further investigation. In the end, I agree with Fabro that there is only one line of participation between the creature and the Creator and with Doolan that we should not speak about a direct line of participation between the created essence and the divine exemplars.

As the concluding paragraphs to Chapter Seven showed, Fabro's theory of participation has important consequences both with regard to the participative structure of created *ens* (4.2.3.2) and the analogy of being (the foundational primacy of analogy of attribution) (5.3). Fabro's theory of *esse* as intensive act contrasts with the current tendency of some Thomists to affirm a tripartite distinction within created *ens* (subsistence, essence, *esse*) or to so impoverish the essence as to equate it with a purely negative

principle. I cautioned that in Fabro's theory more attention needs to be given to the difference between speaking about the real distinction between essence and *esse* in *ens* and speaking about the substance's participation in *actus essendi*. With regard to the analogy of being, I agree with Fabro that the "analogy of attribution" is the fundamental analogy and that the analogy of proportionality is useful above all in the initial, ascending phases of metaphysical reflection, and the compositions of finite *ens*. I concluded Chapter Seven with a lengthy summary of Montagnes' theory on the doctrine of the analogy of being and Fabro's assessment and critique of that theory.

* * *

Undoubtedly, Fabro has contributed much to Thomistic metaphysics in the twentieth century and this dissertation is a testimony to that contribution. After the celebration of the 100th anniversary of Fabro's birth, I hope that this dissertation, by comprehensively presenting the method and structure of Fabro's metaphysical reflection, also contributes to a "philosophy of *genuinely metaphysical* range, capable, that is, of transcending empirical data in order to attain something absolute, ultimate and foundational in its search for truth" (*Fides et Ratio*, 83).

Rome, December 12, 2012

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The bibliography contains only those works that were consulted for or used in the dissertation. It is divided as follows: 1. Works by Cornelio Fabro; 2. Doctoral dissertations, books and articles on or that refer to Cornelio Fabro and his metaphysics; 3. Works by St. Thomas Aquinas; 4. Other works consulted.

1. Works by Cornelio Fabro

1.1 Books

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